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ABSTRACT

This report describes Learning Unlimited, an alternative education program at North Central High School in Washington Township, Indianapolis, Indiana, as a model upon which other alternative education programs might be based. The program was established to keep potential high school dropouts in school, and to provide a new kind of educational experience for students who were successful in but unchallenged by the traditional high school curriculum. Its main emphases are individualized learning activities and methods based on student-developed objectives, learning through community experience, and one-to-one student teacher relationships. The report (1) provides a brief history of the program from 1974 to the present; (2) identifies areas of learning and educational activities that offer challenges to students; (3) describes such elements of the academic program as individualized learning contracts on which each students' attendance at every class are based; (4) explores various types of community learning experiences; and (5) discusses elements that contribute to the effectiveness of this and similar programs, including student and staff characteristics, resources, staff development, and evaluation. The impacts of Learning Unlimited on North Central High School and Washington Township are described, and questions and answers concerning the program are presented. (MJL)

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LEARNING UNLIMITED

A MODEL FOR OPTIONS EDUCATION

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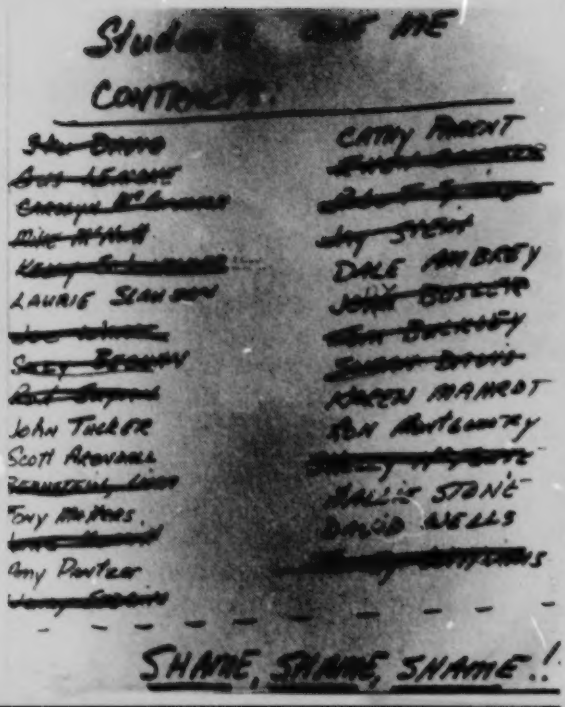
NORTH CENTRAL
HIGH SCHOOL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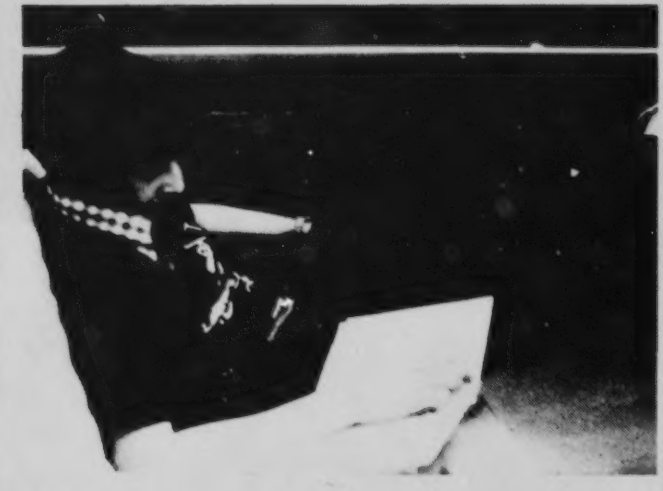


INTRODUCTION

Three rooms separated by sliding doors, no windows. The desks are unarranged, green chalkboards on casters create a maze of spaces. The walls are covered with sign-up sheets for seminars, field trips, service projects, and community classes. Grafitti has its share of space, too: Jimmy Carter with a moustache and horns, drawings by preschool children of staff members, mailing addresses of traveling students, stereo equipment for sale, photographs, quotes—"Is there life after birth?" "Are there twinkies after death?" Posters are everywhere. Books abound. Notes dot the student message center which is made of peg board and golf tees. A jelly glass with daisies in it sits inside one of the teacher's mailboxes.

In the center room, one can relax on an old couch or on the well worn rug on the floor. Arrangements of heavy crates serve as bookshelves and seats. Portable chalkboards section off teachers' conference areas in one room. Strange objects hang from the ceiling, reflecting something of the personalities housed in that room each day. A plastic Bicentenniel blimp dubbed "the Hindenburg" hovers over one desk; a styrofoam and feather puppet dances over another. Plants in various stages of growth add warmth to the surroundings.

Students start to filter into the rooms around 8:15. For many of them, the day doesn't officially begin until 9:30, but they like to get there early when they can. By 8:30 the middle section of the three room complex begins to buzz and on the periphery, a few small groups begin to push chairs together to make seminar circles. After staking their claims, the students surround themselves with the movable green chalkboards, creating a classroom just large enough to serve their needs. They proceed to discuss whatever it was that brought them together, sometimes led by a teacher, sometimes by a student.

A bell rings at 9:30 and chaos reigns as the remainder of the students arrive on the school buses. One student makes his entrance in a tuxedo with a white rose in his buttonhole. Another rushes to greet him, looking as straight as his friend is freaky. They both like photography and excitedly share their latest prints. Several of the teachers stroll in from the lounge and are hailed: "Hey, Mike, I read this really weird book over the weekend." "Jay, did you hear that Neil Young is coming to town?" "Judy, you won't believe the ads we found for the propaganda class!" Everyone is glad to see each other.

People begin to settle into their respective activities and things calm down a little—

. . . Some leave to attend traditional classes in the regular high school program

. . . Some leave the area for alternative program seminars in borrowed rooms throughout the school

. . . Some leave the building for community learning experiences

. . . Some stay for individual conferences with their teachers

. . . Some stay to talk or study in the part of the complex that students have claimed as their own

. . . Some use the telephones to arrange for new experiences at community sites

The program director arrives late, having attended a meeting of administrators that morning, and a group of students swarm about him, asking questions and sharing experiences. He grins at them and ducks his head. They follow him into his office to talk excitedly about some pro-

ject they are working on until his telephone rings. They stand around for a while joking with the secretary and then go about their business.

Oblivious to the uproar, a boy in bib overalls and thongs is typing diligently. He is forty pages into his first novel and works on it every morning at school. As the lights go off and a film begins, he calmly takes the paper out of the typewriter and walks with the latest chapter over to the desk of his English teacher who helps him evaluate it in terms of style, grammar, structure, and punctuation. He is taking a course in creative writing this semester and will get a grade as well as the royalties (he hopes!) for the novel.

In the afternoon, the Southwest Seminar meets in the third room of the complex which is set aside for group discussions and classes. When the discussion of the novel LITTLE BIG MAN lags a little, students ask questions of the teacher who will be accompanying ten of them on an upcoming trip to Arizona. They are anxious to know about the Navajo Indian teenagers they will be living with and going to school with for two weeks.

The day winds down about 2:00. A lot of students are gone by then — either home, or to jobs, or to community activities. The telephone rings less often, only somewhat short of constantly. In one corner the art teacher is teaching orgami to a small group of students. At the other end of the room, several teachers sit with four or five students noisily discussing politics. People visiting from another school system saunter through, seeming a little perplexed by the loose atmosphere. The student host assures them that it just SEEMS like chaos.

*By 4:15 everyone is gone. The rooms, despite their comfortable disarray, seem strangely cold without the laughter of the people who warm them all day. The janitors have given up and don't even come in any more, leaving the clutter suspended in darkness until morning when life comes again to school.**

Though the previous description captures the spirit and offers a sense of the scope of the **Learning Unlimited** experience, it is important to note that such programs can be captured and defined only in moments. In the time it takes to record the present, it becomes the past. A true alternative program changes constantly, for to survive it must meet the needs of all the people involved.

The alternative program at North Central High School is different now than it was during its first year of operation. It will change even more in the future. This publication is designed to present the first five years of **Learning Unlimited** as a model for teachers, administrators, parents, and students who are in the process of developing an alternative program in their own community. Other materials are available by mail and are indicated throughout the text by this symbol.* Directions for ordering additional material can be found on page 92. While the insights of **Learning Unlimited** students and staff may be helpful in planning an alternative school, remember that each learning environment is different; even schools that seem to have identical socio-economic and racial characteristics have different characters. It is almost impossible to transplant one school's successful innovations, intact, into a new situation. **Learning Unlimited** and other programs like it reflect the special interests and talents of the people who work and learn there. As staff and students change and move on, so does the unique essence of any program evolve. Let the ideas and methodologies of **Learning Unlimited** bend and flex to fit the distinctive needs and talents of the people who will work and learn in your educational setting.

*Shoup, Barbara, **Living and Learning for Credit**, Phi Delta Kappa, (Bloomington, IN., 1978).

CHAPTER ONE
EVOLUTION

A History of Change

Alternative schools have traditionally been a dumping ground for problem students — students who couldn't or wouldn't adapt to traditional schooling. But in the early 70's, administrators in Washington Township, a suburb of Indianapolis, Indiana, began to experiment with an idea for a different kind of alternative, one which might help keep some potential drop-outs in school, but would provide, also, a new kind of educational experience for students who were successful but unchallenged by the traditional high school curriculum. Lilly Endowment agreed to fund such a program for a three year period beginning with the 1974-75 school year. The alternative program within North Central High School would contain a cross-section of students and would experiment with innovative modes of teaching and learning, demonstrating concern for each student's affective development as well as his/her academic life. Part of the grant would be used to help teachers in traditional programs develop classroom options through a variety of in-service experiences.

1974-75

During the fall of 1974 the alternative program staff came together to begin to plan a program design.* The eight teachers and two co-directors collected needs assessment data

from traditional faculty members to use as a springboard for alternative program planning. They attempted to ascertain the faculty's perception of alternative education, and solicited innovative ideas in hopes of developing a sharing climate, a feeling that the alternative program was, in fact, an integral part of the high school.

In addition to working toward educating North Central teachers about alternative education, the staff participated in a variety of in-service experiences. Teacher Effectiveness Training, values clarification workshops, and staff retreats helped people gain a sense of their own personal talents. Visits to other alternative schools helped them develop pragmatic goals and objectives for their alternative program which would begin operation that spring. They also attended conferences and met with a variety of "experts" in the then new field of alternative education.

The last third of the semester was spent recruiting and later screening some 600 applicants. After an initial screening, approximately 125 students and their parents were formally interviewed. The alternative program began classes in January, 1975, with 66 students who represented a cross-section of North Central High School. Students' involvement ranged from one class in the alternative program to an equal balance of classes in both programs to total immersion in the alternative program.

The program began with a basic philosophy* and some specific vehicles for putting the philosophy into operation. The following subjects were available in the alternative program: physical education, social studies, English, science, math and business. Administrative and policy decisions were made through a system of participatory management.

Each student worked on an individual basis with his/her teacher(s) utilizing a number of learning options such as one-to-one teacher contact, teacher and student taught seminars, independent study, and community learning. In addition, students had access to a rural campus just outside Spencer, Indiana (about 70 miles from Indianapolis) to facilitate experiences in camping, environmental studies, gardening, and the sociology of small town life. Students planned their curriculums using the Seven Challenge Areas as a guideline. Community based activities were an important part of the alternative program experience and students met weekly with the Challenge Areas advisor to plan and/or process community experiences. A full time van driver was hired to transport students to their community placements. Teachers often worked together to help students develop interdisciplinary curricula.

The semester was divided into two nine week sections; each nine week section was divided into seven weeks of instruction and/or independent study and two weeks of intensive learning. The two week intensives gave students the opportunity to pursue any area in depth. They could remain at school or use the time for community involvement or an extended field trip (alone or with a group). Students' intensives, subject to staff approval, were carefully planned with very specific goals and objectives. Grading options were explored, and based on the school board's ruling that grades must be given, the students and staff developed a system of negotiation for a letter grade which was augmented by personal narratives written for each student by his/her teacher.

The alternative programs spoke to the affective needs of students in a variety of ways. Each student and his/her parents belonged to Family Group which was led by a staff member and met regularly to provide a social function as well as a forum for dealing with personal and program problems. A weekend retreat was held at a state park to further deepen ties between students and staff.

Students were encouraged to participate in program policy-making through a weekly Town Meeting. Here students spoke to program problems and successes. That first year they developed a student discipline board to deal with internal problems and they voted to name the alternative program **Learning Unlimited.**

At the end of the semester students conducted an evaluation of **Learning Unlimited** through a Judicial Inquiry, a concept developed by Dr. Robert Wolf of Indiana University which is based on a legalistic approach to problem solving.

Learning Unlimited's first year might best be characterized by its atmosphere of openness and experimentation. Students, staff and parents exhibited a strong sense of ownership in and indentification with the program. Encouraged by the spirit of "anything goes", students became involved in a wide variety of innovative projects. Because they identified so strongly with the alternative program, there seemed to be an automatic bond which cemented them together as a group. Traditional adolescent friendship patterns were broken and it was not unusual to find surprisingly deep relationships developing among students who would probably not even have crossed paths socially in the hierarchy of the larger school. Alliances among students and staff ran deep, and it was during this first year that the tone was set for the easy, comfortable student/teacher relationships that would come to be the hallmark of **Learning Unlimited** for the five year funding period.

1975-76

The program's second year brought many changes. Half of the original staff, including one of the directors, moved on, and in their place a whole new set of personalities was established. During the first year, the staff had been totally immersed in their alternative program responsibilities; this year there were a variety of levels of involvement of staff. An additional English teacher was hired full time and three interns from Indiana University's Alternative Schools Teacher Education Program (ASTEP) were hired on a one year contract. Two veteran traditional program teachers taught several classes in **Learning Unlimited** and a limited foreign language component was introduced. An art class was added to the curriculum.

The student faction changed also: the program roster showed 150 students at several levels of involvement. With the expansion of students and staff, some problems emerged which were chronic for the next four years. Whereas, the first year, most students identified strongly with the program and expressed an undefinable feeling of community with all the other students involved, students the second year began to break down into more traditional groups. Some of the students who had been involved from the beginning resented the "invasion" of new personalities. "It's just not the same this year, " they complained, just as students after them have complained every autumn since until they become used to the new rhythms and systems necessitated by a whole new set of needs, interests, talents and personalities. The part time student became more common, a person who chose to spend just a fraction of his/her day in the program, to use it as an option for remediation in an area of difficulty or increased challenge in an area which was unsatisfying to him/her in the traditional program.

Individualized instruction and community learning continued to be crucial components of **Learning Unlimited,** but with the increased enrollment, van service became too unwieldy and was abandoned. School bus service to the downtown area was provided two days a week, but for the most part, students became responsible for providing their own transportation. Several staff members used the rural campus for intensive experiences in drama, sociology, and science. Other intensives were taken to the Florida Keys (science), Rough Rock, Arizona (social studies), McCormick's Creek State Park (English—to read **Walden**), Washing-

ton, D.C. (history) and Berea College, Kentucky (art). An urban campus, a base of operation for students in downtown Indianapolis, was established with the cooperation of Indiana University-Purdue University of Indianapolis. Students checked in on a weekly basis with the challenge areas coordinator to record their activities in the Seven Challenge Areas.

Teachers and students continued to work together on a one-to-one basis but increasing emphasis was placed on seminar participation in addition to the commonly used independent study option. A contract form was developed, and while students were still free to decide what they would learn (using the Seven Challenge Areas as a guideline) they had to submit a formal contract to each of their teachers outlining goals and objectives and enabling activities. In an evaluation conference at the end of the grading period, each student was asked to give himself/herself a grade based on the fulfillment of his/her contract — considering the quality as well as the quantity of work completed. Teachers continued to augment the letter grade with written narratives every nine weeks.

Because the students and staff traveled frequently to conferences and gave presentations for university classes and civic groups, the program began to be noticed by educators throughout the state and, occasionally, the nation. Thus was the beginning, that year, of the "fishbowl" existence for **Learning Unlimited** students and staff. Since that second year it is not uncommon on any given day to find small groups of people wandering around **Learning Unlimited,** questioning teachers and students, jotting down notes, taking photographs and recording or even filming seminars and other educational activities.

Though the program director preferred to keep a low profile with the press due to general misinformation about the concept of alternative education, several newspaper articles and television news spots appeared which increased the attention and in some cases heightened the controversy about the educational value of such a program. Perhaps this is as good a place as any to note the general feeling within the high school and township about **Learning Unlimited.** Again, misinformation took its toll. That and the inevitable incidents (and the rumors surrounding them) that go along with a highly innovative program contributed to some negative reactions among traditional school faculty. The staff was, that year, somewhat flamboyant and it seemed that there was an unusually large number of students who fell under that category, too. Their easy manner with each other and their passionate involvement with this unfamiliar educational concept must have seemed unnerving — even threatening — to some of the more conservative teachers. For the program to survive, with principles intact, in this large suburban school environment, everyone would have to give a little.

In addition to the year-end Judicial Inquiry organized by students, a formal evaluation of **Learning Unlimited** was conducted by Dr. James McKinney of Ball State University.* Near the end of the year, students elected two "student directors" to represent them at the weekly staff meetings. They spent many hours in Town Meeting and committee meetings assessing program issues such as student commitment to **Learning Unlimited,** community learning, and the Challenge Areas. They made some recommendations to be worked out that summer for the following year. Community involvement should be better defined, they said, and distinctions should be made between out of school expectations for core and part-time students. Also, they called for an increased commitment to teaching and learning survival skills, those life skills that they would need to master if they were to become competent, productive adults. Several staff members and a group of students were hired that summer to develop strategies for dealing effectively with these areas of concern. Other staff members worked with a committee of traditional program staff to develop specific learning competencies for classes

offered in **Learning Unlimited** and developed four interdisciplinary seminars to be taught in the program the following year.

At the end of the school year, the School Board voted to extend the funding period from three to five years, making a commitment to a gradual transferral of fiscal responsibility to the township.

1976-77

Imagine two ferris wheels mounted on a platform sitting side by side, each one with only one passenger seat. The two wheels begin to move slowly, one carrying its passengers in a clockwise motion, the other moving counter-clockwise. They pick up speed, moving exactly the same rate as they swing the passengers upward. The highest point of the structure is joined together by a colorful banner which lights up as the cars reach the apex together and begin to shift perspective, each moving downward, but in opposite directions. Perhaps it is fair to compare **Learning Unlimited** in its middle year to such a ride. An increasing concern with the accountability of its academic component brought it forward to meet the free-wheeling community component at a kind of apex.

The program had expanded and changed again. The student population was up to 250. The foreign language component was dropped and several staff members moved on. The core of the alternative program had stabilized. Most had come off their extremely intense involvement with the program and had seasoned to the point where they could present their philosophies in an objective, non-threatening manner. Also, the research done in the program had begun to show its positive effects on students and the staff felt less on the defensive than they had in the past. As a result, they made a more concentrated effort that third year to develop a kind of brokering relationship with the traditional faculty. A catalogue of offerings in the school and community was distributed and teachers were encouraged to experiment with these options for their students. Community coordinators arranged guest speakers and field trips, often providing transportation and occasionally acting as fill-in teachers so traditional staff members could be free to leave the building.

Increasingly positive feedback on the program and the desire to share what had been learned and developed so far resulted in an additional Lilly Grant to be used for the production of a film, "Choice Not Chance", which presented **Learning Unlimited** as an educational model for school administrators.*

By student design, core members were defined as being those who had 50% or more of their classes in the alternative program. They were expected to have more in-depth community experiences than part time students and show proof of survival skill mastery; they were also expected to attend Town Meeting regularly and participate in the family group of their choice. In return, they were given priority in the choice of participants for retreats, intensives, and other special learning activities. Community coordinators interviewed core students every nine weeks and recorded their community and challenge areas activities. In addition to handling behavior problems the student discipline board dealt with students referred for lack of commitment in these non-academic program components. During this year, students organized "mini" judicial inquiries to deal with issues that concerned them such as the structure of the government option and the student/teacher ratio in the English option.

With increased numbers, written narratives were discontinued and the contract process was streamlined by the learning competencies which broke the curriculum down into specific, measurable skills. Students could test out of requirements by proving their competency in a

diagnostic-prescriptive pre-test administered by teachers early in the year. Students were still expected to do community and creative projects for each class and still utilized a variety of learning options as the Challenge Areas were still considered the guideline for planning a well-rounded curriculum. Final examinations were administered which tested specific skill development.

As academic accountability increased, more students in the high school chose to take a class in **Learning Unlimited** to augment their traditional education. The make-up of the alternative program student body shifted a little to include more students who still valued, primarily, and were successful in a traditional school setting, but sought diversion and challenge through experiences in **Learning Unlimited.**

As the student population of the program changed and new needs were defined and met, it became difficult to make students accountable for non-academic, non-graded areas such as survival skills, community learning and Challenge Areas. And as the year came to a close, the staff and students decided to integrate these components into each academic class instead of distinguishing them from academics and fragmenting, in some ways, the learning process .

1977-78

With the integration of the Challenge Areas into academic subject areas, the role of **Learning Unlimited's** community coordinator shifted. There was one community coordinator that year who worked half-time having, primarily, the responsibility of planning group experiences to help orient the students to community learning and also to develop a weekly seminar which would speak to the affective and practical needs of young adults. The community coordinator also acted as a resource person for students and staff.

The program population rose to about 350 students, and again the staff changed.

Evaluation, as always, was important. The director coordinated a major follow-up study of program graduates. Also, the program became part of the Minnesota Evaluation of Experiential Learning Project, a national research study.

The program addressed the needs of an increasing variety of students with varying levels of involvement. For some students **Learning Unlimited** was a lifeline — a warm spot in a cold world. Without it, they might have abandoned entirely the idea of an education. For others, the program was a change, a diversion in a traditional school day. But at the heart of the program (and this seems to be the one unchanging factor) are those "alternative people", students who have taken this learning philosophy to heart and made it an integral part of their whole life-style.

1978-79

In its final funding year, **Learning Unlimited** might be best described as an umbrella for a variety of options, with standards for the depth and nature of learning options and community involvement defined by each teacher. Under a new director, one of North Central High School's assistant principals, there was a core staff of five full time teachers (English, social studies, phys ed, business) and two IU interns (English and administrative assistant). Ten traditional program teachers (math, English, social studies, art, and science) were assigned to the program one period a day as a kind of in-service experiment. During the fourth year, one alterna-

tive English teacher had asked to be assigned a class in the traditional program where she experimented with using options and competencies. During the fifth year, this teacher had no class load and spent the year working with traditional program teachers and students on a one to one basis to develop in-class options, developing, also, a program of study hall options.

Led by a strong student director, **Learning Unlimited** students worked on defining their areas of power in order to best utilize their engeries. A student committee organized a year long series of weekly forums with guest speakers to be held during Town Meeting.

Over a five year period, **Learning Unlimited** has stabilized as a strong independent study program with some community focus and a strong commitment to dealing with students effectively as well as academically. Staff and students have remained open to new possibilities and have experimented with a wide spectrum of educational innovations. In a sense, the program has been a kind of learning lab for the high school and township at large, trying out new ideas in small, carefully monitored settings.

Imagine a kaleidoscope: its myriad of small chips of varying shapes and color. The chips do not change in nature, each is inclusive of itself; but as the kaleidoscope is turned, they fall with each revolution into new patterns. One pattern is not intrinsically more beautiful than any other; the wonder of a kaleidoscope is in its diversity — the fact that the same basic ingredients can produce with manipulation, such an incredible variety of design. In **Learning Unlimited,** some components have been present all along: community involvement, individual instruction, strong personal student/teacher relationships, and a concern for affective as well as academic development are but a few. These components have shifted each year, creating new patterns of learning. **Learning Unlimited** has been, in some ways, a completely different program every year; in other ways, it has not changed a bit. The undefinable essence of it remains and is passed on as new teachers and students come, learn awhile, and then move on in new directions. There remains a genuine pleasure in learning and in the personal relationships that develop in the classrooms.

THE FUTURE

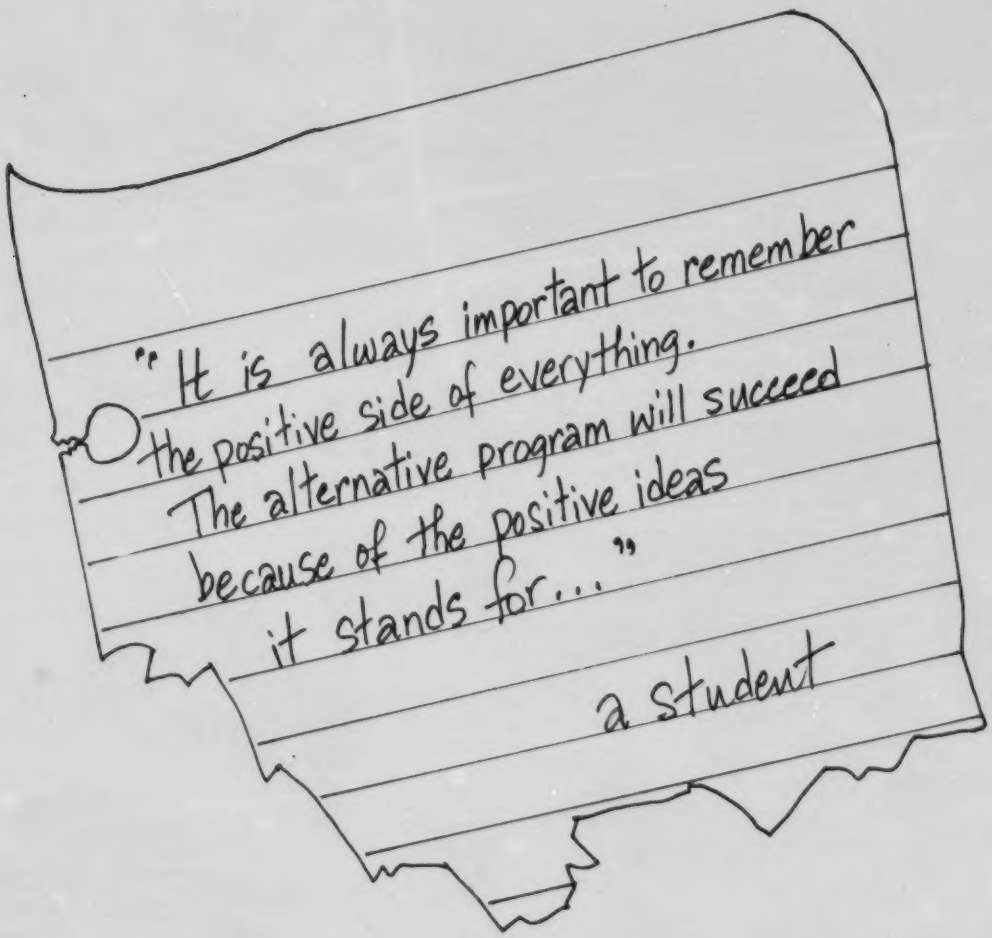
The Board of Education and administration of MSD Washington Township are firmly committed to the concept of providing learning options at both the elementary and secondary level. Next year, an interdisciplinary basic skills option will be introduced as another alterntive program within the high school. A performing arts option also begins in 1979. As the external funding comes to an end, the School Board has agreed to support **Learning Unlimited** with local funds. Although it may be too early to predict what form the program may take in the future, in all probability enrollment will continue to represent about ten percent of the high school population. Those attracted to the program, regardless of IQ, will most likely be project oriented, have a strong sense of what they want to learn, have some natural flair for creativity, and enjoy the variety of ways in which to learn.

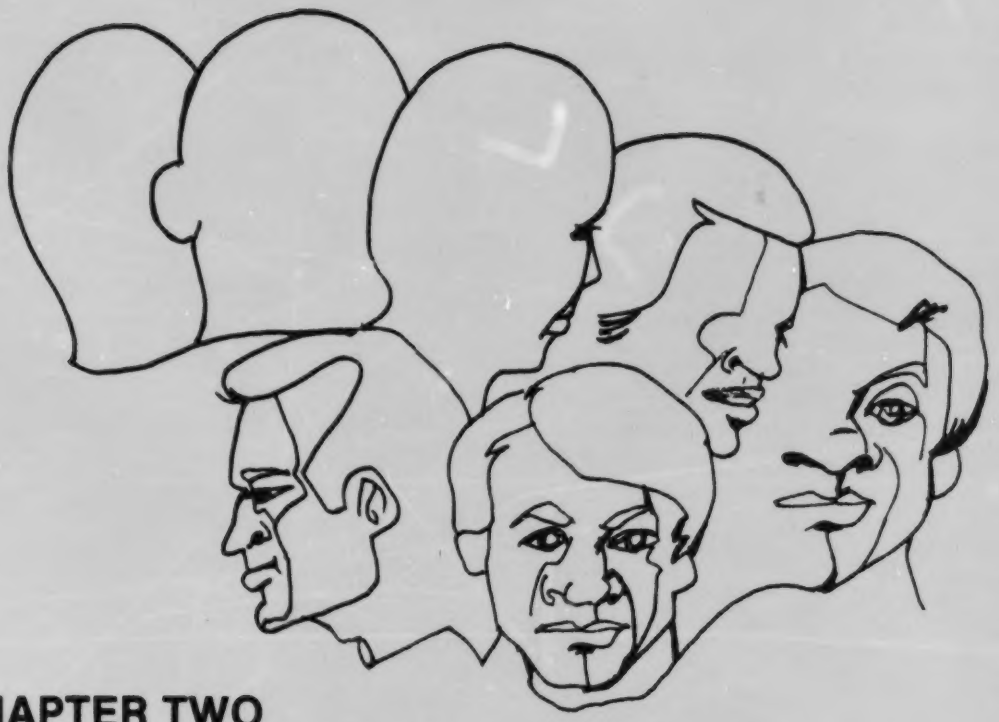
Certainly the program will attempt to respond to the changing needs and objectives of all the actors in the program. Teachers will continue to experiment with innovative ways of teaching and learning. Now is the time to refocus and examine some new themes. The Commission on Schools of the North Central Association and the Charles F. Kettering Foundation have chosen **Learning Unlimited** as one of four secondary school programs to assist in the development of a model program in Global Education. The thrust of this developmental effort

will help students and staff identify new and exciting challenges for the future. The four basic themes that will become an integral part of Challenge Education beginning next fall are:

- VALUING DIVERSITY
- THE WORLD AS AN INTERDEPENDENT SYSTEM
- DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS
- UNDERSTANDING PREVAILING WORLD CONDITIONS AND THE PROCESS OF CHANGE

The purpose of these themes, and Challenge Education, is to help students find practical value in what they learn. It offers them a point of reference to help them see the relationship between the classroom and the real world. The future is viewed as a challenge. Change, growth, and evolution is what **Learning Unlimited** is all about!


"It is always important to remember
the positive side of everything.
The alternative program will succeed
because of the positive ideas
it stands for..."
a student



CHAPTER TWO
CHALLENGE EDUCATION

Transitions From Adolescence To Adulthood

Nearly all societies have rites of passage to mark the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Aboriginal tribesmen in Australia send their sons on a Walkabout, a survival exercise in the wilderness, leaving them alone for half a year to grapple with the natural environment. Maurice Gibbons described the Australian Walkabout in the Phi Delta Kappan article, "Walkabout: Searching for the Right Passage from Childhood to Adulthood," (May, 1974) and offered a model for a modern Walkabout. The basic principles of such an experience would be personal challenge, individual and group decision-making, self direction in the pursuit of goals, real world significance in an activity, and community involvement at all stages of preparation and conclusion. The principles could be incorporated into the curriculum in a variety of ways, but in each case, the focus should be the personal development of students.

Gibbon's Walkabout article played an important part in shaping **Learning Unlimited.** During the semester before the program began operation, the staff developed a list of Seven Challenge Areas which they felt included all the elements Gibbons described in his article. These challenge areas would form the basis of the **Learning Unlimited** philosophy; each student would learn to use them as a guideline for planning a comprehensive individualized curriculum. Staff and students recognized these areas as valuable and necessary components to an interdisciplinary curriculum which would prepare students for life in both a practical and academic sense. A curriculum based on these Seven Challenge Areas allows a student many freedoms usually closed to adolescents, yet recognizes that all life has some kind of structure and that to be successful, both educators and students must work toward a meaningful structure — one which is flexible enough to encourage independence and critical decision-making, yet strong enough to maintain academic standards and promote self-discipline.

The Seven Challenge Areas

ADVENTURE AND FIELD EXPERIENCE

Offers a challenge to the students' daring, endurance, and skill in an unfamiliar environment. These could occur both inside and outside the school and are particularly related to the natural and social sciences.

Student spends a week shadowing a doctor on his rounds

Student spends a semester in Israel in a kibbutz

Student works in polls during election

Student arranges internship with Indianapolis mayor

Student participates in "Roving and Writing" seminar

Student participates in winter camping and backpacking expedition

CREATIVITY AND ENRICHMENT

Offers a challenge for students to explore, cultivate, and express their imagination in some aesthetically pleasing form. This challenge area includes both content and process.

Student designs and constructs animation device and makes films

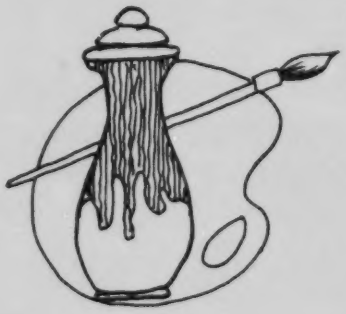
Student is commissioned to design a brochure for local museum

Student interns with local artist

Students facilitate dance activity for a group of educators at a conference

Student creates media presentation on himself

Student attends theater performance



SERVICE

Offers a challenge to identify a human need for assistance and provide it without expectation of reward.

Student organizes a project to teach special education students to swim

Student assists at suicide prevention center

Student organizes activities for Handicap Awareness Week

Student works as teacher's aide at an elementary school

Students organize a conference for alternative school students and form a network of alternative schools

Student gives Sabbath service at a local nursing home

COGNITIVE SKILLS

Offers a challenge to students to acquire a breadth and depth of knowledge in a variety of content areas.

Students have increased scores on SAT exams

Students have improved grade point average after entering the program

Students have matriculated to some of the nation's prestigious universities

Students have earned college credit on AP exams

Students have enrolled in college level courses

Students write a textbook on Unigov

PRACTICAL SKILLS

Offers a challenge for students to explore utilitarian activity, to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to work in that field, and to produce something useful.

Students raise crops and market them from rural campus

Student joins a plumber in an internship

Students organize maple syrup processing

Students take first-aid from local firemen

Student designs and builds a model house

Students raise money to finance intensives

Students complete their own income tax forms

FUTURISM
AND
DECISION
MAKING

Offers a challenge for students to identify what choices they make in life, why they make them, and how they might make other choices and decisions tomorrow and in the future that could affect their own moral growth and that of those around them.

Student joins an ecology group in community action project on air and water pollution

Student attends sessions at Planned Parenthood

Students exercise group decision-making in Town Meeting

Student interns with a genetics specialist

Student does career exploration through an internship with stock broker

Student researches housing problems/solutions with a local governmental agency

LOGICAL
INQUIRY
AND
RESEARCH

Offers a challenge for students to explore a question or problem of personal importance, and to pursue solutions systematically.

Students design research project, analyzing data with a computer

Students join city and county officials in interviewing victims of crime

Students participate in putting **Learning Unlimited** on public trial (see Judicial Inquiry)

Student undertakes systematic study of religions by visiting churches and interviewing leaders and practitioners

Student arranges an adversary-advocate presentation regarding medical malpractice between an insurance executive and representative from the American Medical Association

Student works as a research assistant for a lawyer in an environmental case

Student interns at Common Cause

The interpretation of the Challenge Areas by **Learning Unlimited** students and staff has evolved from the cataloguing and recording of all learning experiences in a non-academic format to a total integration of challenge and academic requirements. At one point, students and staff refined the practical skills challenge into an extensive list of survival skills needed for functioning effectively in the adult world. At another time, a staff member experimented with a pilot program — a semester Walkabout for seniors.

The Challenge Areas coordinator became responsible for a number of areas which didn't fall easily into academic or administrative categories. He/she was responsible for encouraging that these seven important elements not be isolated into a discipline of their own, but pervade, instead, the whole curriculum. He/she was also responsible for working towards a variety of kinds of communication in the program and extending to the regular program at North Central and the community at large. This person periodically surveyed the feelings of students and staff on some of the "hot" issues, attempting to identify the major problem areas and elicit ideas for solutions. A program newspaper was coordinated through Challenge Areas, as was the Student Action In Learning Conference for alternative school students two years in a row.

"To be effective, challenges need to be real, not vicarious or simulated. They ought to expend the students' capacities as fully as possible. They ought to pose some risk, provoke curiosity, or instill doubt. They ought to confront the student with obstacles that are difficult so that he is met with the necessity of making decisions and learning to live with the consequences. And of course, every student ought to experience the satisfaction of having met a difficult and challenging task and succeeded."* The following set of guidelines were developed to facilitate planning of challenge experiences. Other materials included were developed by **Learning Unlimited** staff and students and may be helpful in creating a Walkabout program to fit the needs of any unique learning environment.

Thirteen Elements of Challenge Education

1. CHOICE—Students are required to make decisions based upon clearly stated options. This requires establishing priorities, assessing needs, analyzing consequences, etc. Decision making skills are crucial if one is to be an effective, contributing member of society.

2. COMMITMENT—Through the use of negotiated learning contracts, students are required to make their commitments in writing. These commitments are made to parents and teachers and are fulfilled according to a specified timetable. Failure to fulfill commitments should have consequences which result in valuable learning experiences. Commitments promote a greater sense of responsibility and assist in transferring of some of the ownership for learning from the teacher to the student.

3. RISK—Living implies risk. However, in pursuit of the self actualized life, students should be encouraged to take calculated risks. Risk is relative. What is safe and easy for one student may be extremely difficult and risky for another. Risk always includes the potential for failure, otherwise, it isn't risk. Within carefully established guidelines and procedures students (and their parents) can feel reasonably safe to attempt the untried and unknown.

4. TRANSFER OF OWNERSHIP—Choice, commitment, and risk all imply a greater involvement on the part of the student in determining what, when, and how learning objectives will be attempted. This shift of responsibility from teacher to student should cause stu-

*Duckett, Willard, "Learning Unlimited, the N.C.H.S. Alternative Program," Phi Delta Kappa Walkabout Newsletter, Jan., 1976, Volume I.

dents to accept ownership for their own successes . . . and failures. As students begin to take charge of their lives, they are free to "own" their achievements and credit themselves rather than others. As with success, blame for failure is "owned" by the student and does not get projected to the program, teachers, parents, or anyone else.

5. FAILURE IS VALUABLE—It is important to understand that experiencing failure can produce positive learning . . . if the experience is adequately processed. Too many students are unwilling to make an honest effort because they fear failure. Unfortunately these young people have learned that failing results in diminished self esteem and self recrimination. It doesn't have to be that way! Dr. James McElhinney, Ball State University, states, "Schools ought to be a place where kids can feel free to fail and from that failure find support and assistance in making that failure into a valuable learning experience."

6. EFFORT—Challenge Education requires more effort than in the traditional classroom setting where probably a full 90% of the decisions about the learning process are made by the teacher. Thus, as students are given more options, they must extend themselves beyond the typical requirements. Effort is also relative, and like risk taking, will differ from student to student. Hopefully, the effort that goes into a project will transcend the experience itself. Often with failure, and sometimes with success, the reward is not always commensurate with the effort extended. Thus, the effort itself should become the essence of reward.

7. BENEFIT OF SERENDIPITY—Challenge activities are all planned and predetermined goals and objectives are written in anticipation of predictable learner outcomes. However, one advantage of challenge education is that always certain unanticipated benefits result which could not have been predicted by anyone. This phenomenon is referred to as "serendipity" and we gladly embrace it as another of "life's happy accidents." The differing perception of each individual determines this phenomenon.

8. ACTION—Challenge Education implies action. Few challenges are passive in nature. Challenge implies active participation in some facet of one's life. Action also includes all the previous elements of choice, commitment, risk, transfer of ownership, failure, and effort.

9. CREATIVE TENSION—As one begins to experience these elements of Challenge Education, it is predictable that some dissonance and disequilibrium may occur. This stage of growth is referred to as creative tension. As students begin to change, to accept responsibility, to seek answers, it is necessary that some of the old ways give way to the new. It is the process of change that causes the "system" to be out of balance as the new discoveries and solutions to the dilemmas of life are examined and integrated. As the new learning becomes adequately modified and familiar, the dissonance and disequilibrium are resolved until the cycle begins anew.

10. INTENSITY—Challenge Education requires a compression of time and expansion of concentration. Time, in terms of the Carnegie Unit, is no longer applicable. The impact of the experience is heightened by the intensity of the experience. The experience may require a total commitment of time, effort, and skill for an extended period of time. Enter: Burn-out. How long can students or adults endure in a totally mobilized effort of high intensity?

11. ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE—Challenge Education is much more highly structured than traditional learning programs. It requires diagnosis, collaboration, prescription, prediction, enabling activities, identification of resources, linking participation, and evaluation of experiences. To neglect this structure is to invite program chaos and aimless, unproductive activity on the part of students.

12. GROUP ACTION AND INTERACTION—Most, if not all, challenges are carried out in conjunction with others. These others may be peer groups or adults in the working world. The socialization process is essential to survival in this or any other society. While stu-

dents often choose to participate as individuals in challenge activities, always these activities carry into group interaction, as they must share the outcomes with others.

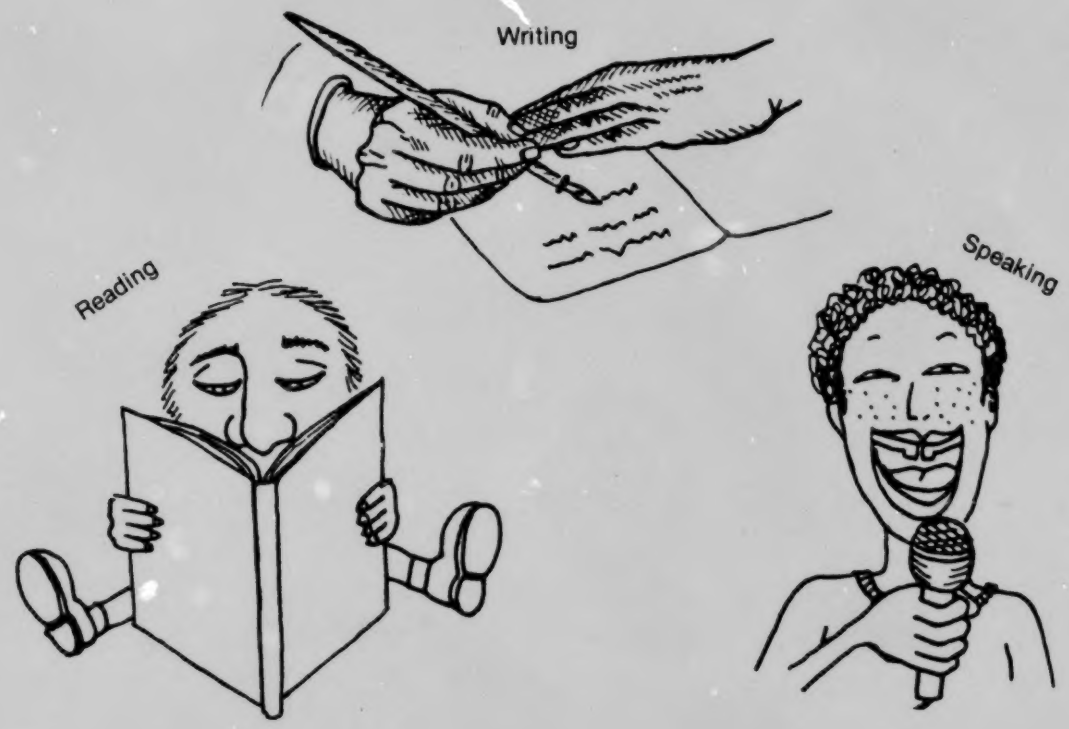
13. ACCOUNTABILITY—It is inevitable that we must all live by our decisions and become accountable for our actions. Students must be held accountable for their behavior, for the value of their products, for the quality of their academic/creative/personal growth, and for the validity of their experiences. All of these outcomes are subject to measurement on the basis of some clearly stated criteria. Certification of achievement could be accomplished by an expert opinion, a norm referenced test, criterion referenced test, a performance test, or by any number of acceptable means of evaluation. Students are expected to share a major portion of responsibility for evaluating the attainment of their educational objectives.

Survival Skills

Students will keep a daily journal recording significant learning experiences occurring outside the formal classroom setting. These will be submitted to the English teachers for periodic evaluation. The purpose of this activity is to increase student awareness of learning opportunities in their environment and to improve written communication skills by organizing and expressing thoughts. (Evaluation includes grammar, spelling, sentence structure, punctuation, organization of thoughts and expression)

Students will compose a business letter with a minimum of one error in form and one in grammar.

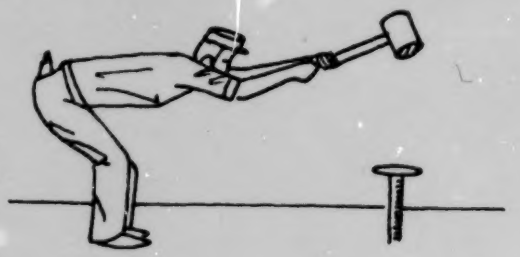
Students will expand their knowledge of the democratic process by participating in the weekly Town Meeting.



Students will demonstrate development of academic skills leading to college or career preparation by mastery of teacher and/or course requirements in each subject matter area. (Copies of required skills are sent to parents with negotiated learning contract.)

Students will design and implement an activity in each of the following Seven Challenge Areas during the semester. The activities may be in addition to course requirements or woven into subject matter areas in an interdisciplinary fashion.

cognitive skills
practical skills
creativity and enrichment
adventure and field experience
futurism and decision-making
inquiry and research
service



Students will develop a realistic self-assessment in academic skill areas by taking a minimum of three standardized examinations.

Students will develop self direction and time management by designing learning activity contracts with their teachers and fulfilling the academic commitments according to the agreed timetables and deadlines.

Students will demonstrate problem solving and social skills by active participation in a weekly Family Group meeting. (Included in this are monthly parent meetings)

Students will demonstrate a respect for the law and self-discipline by obeying program and school rules. Offenses against the program and rule infractions may be referred to the Student Discipline Board. Students may be asked to participate in this judicial process to resolve program conflicts in a fair and just manner.

Careers

Students will explore career possibilities and demonstrate their knowledge and/or long range planning through an oral interview. This may be included as a challenge experience within a course.

Students will demonstrate improved self-confidence by writing a composition describing their own growth in understanding the academic, social, and emotional "self" by listing activities and experiences which illustrate improved competence.

Students will develop public speaking competencies and demonstrate them by making at least one presentation to a group. Students may see the list of program presentations or choose to lead a learning seminar.

Students will develop social skills by interacting with peer group, school authorities, parents, and community resources. Students will secure evaluative feedback data that supports evidence of increased skill on their part in dealing with authority and peers.

Students will recognize the value of family in our society and secure feedback from their own parents or siblings as to their role as a contributing member in their own home.

Students will demonstrate self-motivation skills by fulfilling academic learning contracts and designing enrichment activities beyond teacher requirements through their own initiative.

Students will demonstrate understanding of problem-solving and decision-making processes by documenting three actual decisions or problems in the following manner:

- Make a statement defining the problem
- Anticipate the consequences of each option
- Select one solution.
- Evaluate the decision based on the actual consequences.

Students will demonstrate leadership development by designing and supervising a project (academic, recreational, or social) which involves others in a group endeavor.

Students will visit and/or secure information regarding one university or post high school institution of higher learning.

SENIOR WALKABOUT SEMESTER

The Senior Walkabout Semester is a new program at North Central. It is hoped that the Walkabout will improve the high school experience and especially improve the senior year by offering an exciting alternative during the last semester. The program allows each student to plan a semester around one area of interest. Students are required to utilize the community extensively in addition to using traditional learning resources. Projects should fulfill requirement for the majority of classes being taken and should utilize in some way all of Seven Challenge Areas, Creativity & Enrichment, Adventure and Field Experience, Logical Inquiry and Research, Futurism and Decision-making, Practical skills, Service, and Cognitive skills.

- WALKABOUT MAKES IT POSSIBLE FOR YOU TO STUDY THE THINGS THAT INTEREST AND CONCERN **YOU.**
- WALKABOUT IS DIFFERENT FROM ANYTHING YOU HAVE DONE IN THE LAST ELEVEN YEARS.
- WALKABOUT CHALLENGES YOU, THE INDIVIDUAL, TO STRETCH YOUR LEARNING TO THE LIMITS OF YOUR CAPABILITIES.

Consider the following in formulating ideas for a semester long Walkabout experience:

DETERMINE THE POSSIBILITIES:

1. Explore the topic ideas

*Consider which ones best relate to subject areas you are responsible for covering.
*Consider the worth of projects—to you, personally; to you, academically; will you come up with a body of knowledge or end product which will in some way serve yourself or others?
*Consider feasibility—are the resources you need available here, will you have transportation to community activities, do you have the skills (academic and social) necessary to complete the project, will the cost factor be a problem, do you own or have access to the equipment necessary to complete the project?

2. Planning the experience

*Create SPECIFIC goals and objectives. Make certain that they fulfill requirements for the classes you are taking and include activities for all the Challenge Areas.
*Contact community people necessary to the success of your project and make sure you will be able to carry through the community experiences you plan.
*Set up a time schedule for completion of the various components of your project.
*Identify the learning evidence to be considered for evaluation.
*Identify criteria for evaluation of your experience.

WRITING A WALKABOUT CONTRACT

Students are asked to answer each question as clearly and thoroughly as possible.

1. What will you do? (What is the nature of your long-term community commitment?)
2. When will you go? (days/time) (Have you secured permission from non-alternative teachers and parents?)
3. How many weeks will the experience last?
4. Where will you be? (address/phone)
5. Who will you work with? (person/agency) Do they understand and are they able to accommodate your needs from the experience?
6. Why did you choose this particular topic/experience?
7. What will you do while you are there? (specific tasks/responsibilities)
8. What practical skills do you hope to gain?
9. How do you hope your personal growth as an individual will be affected?
10. List additional short term experiences/observations you plan which will augment your long-term community commitment.
11. To which academic classes will your Walkabout experience relate?
12. How will your experience(s) fulfill specific competencies/academic requirements for these classes? (list objectives with activities which will fulfill them.)
13. List research you will do which will fulfill academic competencies and enrich your practical understanding (ex. papers, surveys, interviews)
14. Name five people who will serve as your evaluative committee.
15. What will be the end product of your Walkabout experience?
16. Which Challenge Areas or survival skills will be covered by this experience or combination of experiences?
17. Look for and record serendipity (unanticipated learnings).

REQUIREMENTS:

1. **A journal** which will combine a "log" of your activities with your personal reactions and reflections.

2. **An end product** — this is up to you! Use your creativity.
   It will be the culmination of your experience and will be presented to your evaluation committee. (some ideas just to get you **started** on the possibilities: slide show, how-to pamphlet, speech, book, art work, photography show, demonstration, certification in voucher form from community supervisor, adversary-advocate hearing, etc.)

3. **A paper** which describes your experience and the benefits you have gained from it. This will be submitted to your evaluation committee at least one week before your scheduled eval uation session.

4. **Bi-weekly check-in seminar sessions** — at this time we will share our experiences, problems.

5. **An evaluation committee.** You may choose it. It should be made up of five people who will review your paper, ask you questions about it, and evaluate your end product in a session at the end of the semester.

6. **A research project** (this will relate to your academic objectives) which will enrich your practical experience.

7. **Challenge** — A real life challenge activity (successful completion results in skill and knowledge).

Some Issues To Consider

BENEFITS:

1. A more exciting way of fulfilling academic requirements.

2. A practical experience in the "real world" which will be helpful to you in the transition from adolescence to adulthood.

3. A brief account of your participation in this pilot project will be placed in your permanent file at North Central. (sent to college or employer if you desire)

4. Taking a few forward steps in the many miles of changes which are a part of attaining self-directed, life-long learning skills which integrate life and learning.

HAZARDS, CONSTRAINTS, CAUTIONS (All of Life Is Not Bliss) or (It Ain't Always Easy!)

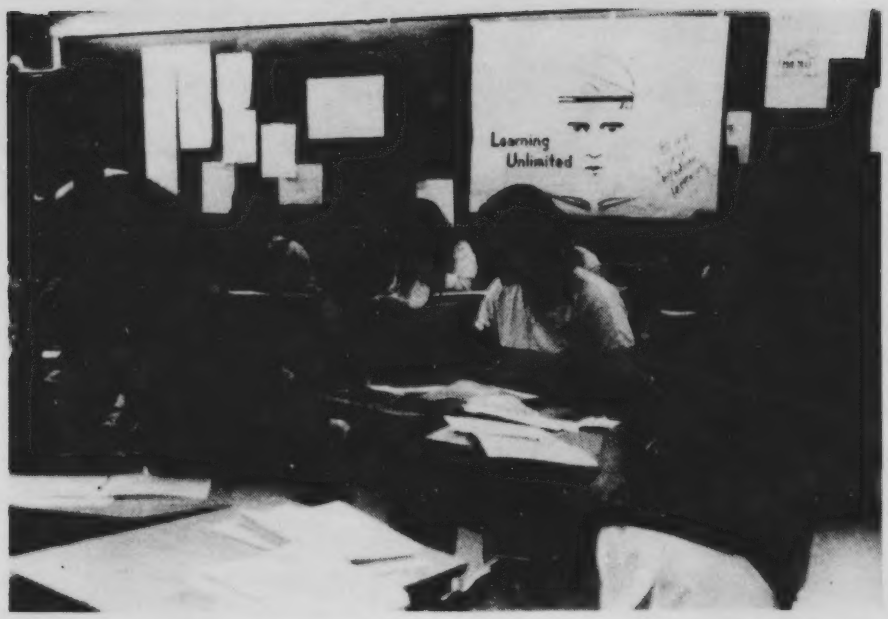
1. **Observation Skills** — learning opportunities are occurring all around you. You must train yourself to be perceptive to maximize the learning potential in your environment. (resource identification and linking)

2. **Time Management** — You must develop the skills of needs assessment, diagnosis-prescription, organization, prioritizing, self-motivation, time and energy allocation.
   Failure to develop the above skills means you flounder in meaningless, aimless activity—and eventual failure.

3. **Inevitable Frustration** — The challenge process carries a disproportionate number of "highs" and "lows". Growth and change are painful. Challenge is frustrating and disconcerting. Although most emerge with a new sense of self and coping skills, some are destroyed by this dissonance and disequilibrium.

4. **Failure is a valuable part of life.** You must adjust your view of failure. Challenge implies the potential for failure. You may learn more from failure than success. It is okay to fail when there are others who care enough (parents, students, teachers) to help you analyze and benefit from your weaknesses.

5. **Independent Study is a lonely endeavor.** If you have difficulty working alone, join with other students in group endeavors.



CHAPTER THREE
ACADEMICS

Equal to . . . Or Better Than! A Standard For Performance

During the first year of operation, emphasis was placed on exploring new learning methods rather than on academic content. Recognizing the fact that students do not learn in the same way or at the same rate, the central focus was on individualization based upon needs, learning styles, and interests. Students pursued topics or units of study in each adademic area, keeping the Seven Challenge Areas in mind. For example, two students visited several county seats throughout the state, photographed court houses, and completed a brief history of Indiana court houses. Another student worked in a senior citizens' home recording impressions and feelings and learning about the operation of retirement homes. A unit of study for one class did not necessarily fulfill all of the Challenge Area requirements; however, through all their course work, students were expected to complete projects within each challenge area during the semester.

The intent of this method (individualization based on Challenge Areas) was to equip students with skills that lead to life long, self directed learning. The values of individualization were recognized as:

- Providing a vehicle for overcoming limitations of the regular school program (i.e. confined by time, space, large groups, teaching toward the middle, etc.).
- Providing students with an opportunity for expanding their personal knowledge about a subject.

- Allowing able students to work to their capacity.
- Motivating students to learn how to learn.
- Encouraging students to reach their own conclusions after exploring topics of personal interest.
- Providing a platform for students who have their own ideas, want to be heard, and to share ideas with other students and teachers.
- Giving students an opportunity to pursue a project or research study in their own unique way.

Although students felt that they learned a great deal and were being challenged academically, this method was somewhat haphazard and undefined and therefore, difficult to justify to regular program staff, administrators and parents. Pertinent questions arose: "How can a student receive credit for American Literature if he/she is not meeting the objectives as outlined in the curriculum guide for that course?" (i.e. reading the prescribed text, **The Scarlet Letter**, and completing required assignments.) "Will my child be prepared for college if he/she takes classes in the alternative program? I recognize the importance and value in community experiences, but will my child have a good academic background?"

In response, staff and students maintained, "It doesn't matter, what specific book is read, or what the topic of a research project might be, but rather that skills are learned. If a student chooses to read and analyze a contemporary novel, he/she acquires the same skills involved as in reading and analyzing a classic." Individualization of this nature allowed students to have choice in content, experiences, and materials which greatly increased motivation.

To aid students and teachers in planning a valuable unit of study, a formalized contract was developed. The contract included goals, objectives, activities, a timetable, criterion for evaluation and signatures of student, teacher and parent. (See next section.) This written agreement made the student accountable for his/her time, allowed for parental input, and demonstrated to the outside world that the alternative program was not just a place to "do one's own thing."

After using this contract form for one semester, the necessity for developing more defined academic standards became apparent to the staff for several reasons. Parents continued to express concern about academic standards and college preparation. It was difficult for students to write specific skill-oriented objectives, thus teachers felt that students needed guidelines to aid in contract writing. Teachers began to generate a list of minimum competencies to be covered in each class. This addition to the learning contract was an effort to communicate to parents and students the requirements for given courses and the expectations of each teacher.Competencies improved realistic goal setting and guaranteed basic academic skills but did not restrict flexibility or reduce creativity in contract negotiation. The process of fulfilling the requirements was still negotiable in most cases as were evaluation procedures and timetables.

In summary, the academic program of **Learning Unlimited** has evolved from a totally independent, unstructured community-based curriculum to one that is competency-based. Competencies have been developed for each academic area and are the "backbone" of the negotiated learning contract. In the words of a student, the alternative program has "tightened up." The competencies, designed to insure the acquisition of academic and practical skills, are easily measurable. They have resulted in greater student, teacher, and program accountability, yet still allow for a high degree of flexibility and individualization.

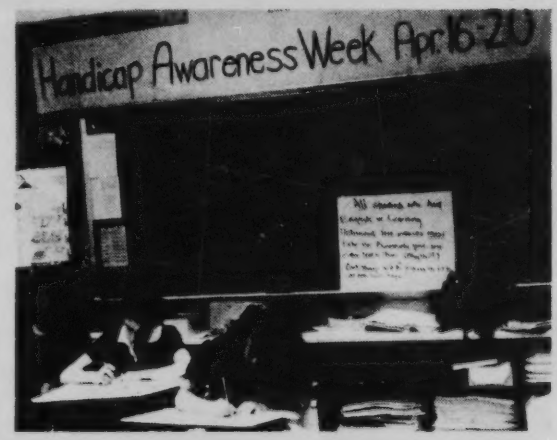
Competency-Based Education

CBE is defined as : a data-based, adaptive, performance-oriented set of integrated processes that facilitate, measure, record, certify within the context of flexible time parameters the demonstration of known, explicitly stated, and agreed upon learning outcomes that reflect successful functioning in life roles. Wow! How's that for jargon? Let's cut through it and see what this means in more understandable terms.

William G. Spady of National Institute of Education as reported in "Competency Based Education: A Bandwagon in Search of a Definition," **The Educational Researcher,** January, 1977.

There are six critical elements to the definition:

1. student outcomes
2. time
3. instruction
4. measurement
5. certification
6. program adaptability



Dr. Larry Lindsay, MSD. Washington Township, has developed these seven questions to help in planning a competency program:

1. What competencies?
2. How will they be measured?
3. When will they be measured?
4. How many minimum skills should students have?
5. How high should the minimums be?
6. Should mimimums be for schools or individual students?
7. What will be done after incompetencies are identified?

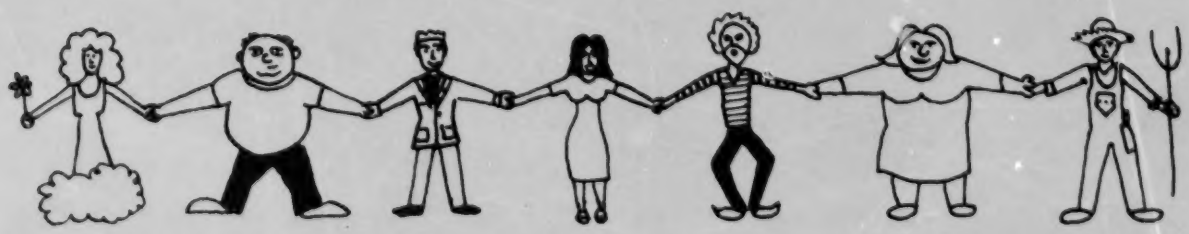
A Comparison of Competency-Based and Conventional Systems of Instruction

	Competency-Based	Conventional
1. Who sets the goals and objectives of instruction?	Both the teacher and student are usually involved. When the teacher sets the goals and objectives the student is told what they are and often is allowed some choice of objective or goal.	The teacher sets the goals and objectives. Often they are not clearly defined. Students are usually not told what they are. Students usually do not have a choice.
2. Who decides on the means and procedures of instruction?	Students often have a choice of alternative routes, experiences and materials to use in pursuing a given goal or objective. The student controls the amount of time spent on the goal or objective.	The teacher usually controls the situation and presents all students with the same materials and experiences for the same amount of time.
3. What is learned?	Students usually learn how to do something.	Students may learn about something.
4. Who decides on the evaluation procedures?	The teacher ensures that the evaluation procedures are consistent with the objectives. Often the student has a choice of ways to demonstrate that he can perform as expected.	The teacher usually gives a test of his or her own design. Students often don't know what is expected of them. Testing procedures tend to be paper and pencil tests.
5. When does evaluation take place?	When the student indicates he is ready.	When the teacher is through teaching a unit of instruction.
6. When does the student move on to the next set of learning goals and objectives?	When the student has mastered the last set of objectives and goals. The student continues working on a set of goals and objectives until mastery is achieved.	When the last unit has been taught and the evaluation of student is completed. Student may have "failed" or "passed" the last unit at various levels of proficiency. Nevertheless all students move on to new content.

COURSE COMPETENCIES

SHOULD BE WRITTEN THAT:

- include methods of repeating, intensifying, and reviewing knowledge and use of skills.
- promote a positive self-image.
- guarantee mastery of academic content and skills.
- increase personal motivation and commitment.
- elevate expectations of self.
- design opportunities for experiencing and creating that fosters responsibility.
- develop self understanding.
- identify resources and give students the skills of locating resources.
- develop self-diagnostic and appraisal skills.
- promote a positive spirit of exploration and individuality.
- instill an attitude of acceptance and tolerance of others.
- create an appreciation and joy for living and learning.
- promote problem-solving and decision-making.
- promote application and practical use of knowledge.
- demonstrate that the performance of a task is its own reward.



Learning Contracts

The negotiated learning contract, signed by student, teacher and parent is the basis of every class offered in **Learning Unlimited.** With the increase in student/teacher ratio, most staff members offer classes or seminars that meet one to three times a week. Seminars are based on academic topics chosen by students and teachers and are smaller than traditional classes. Several interdisciplinary seminars were developed by staff in an effort to integrate disciplines and community experiences. In one such seminar, U.S. History and American Literature were combined by making an in-depth study of each decade. Other interdisciplinary seminars* combined three or more academic disciplines allowing a more realistic examination of a particular topic and providing a format for team teaching.

Students enrolled in the same seminar may share common goals, objectives and required competencies, but no two contracts are identical. Specific material and methods are unique to each individual's interests and needs. Challenge Areas and community experiences have been incorporated into the academic contract. Requirements for the number of community experiences and Challenge Areas per grading period may vary from teacher to teacher. For example, in a six weeks grading period a student may include two challenge area requirements and one community experience in his/her contract for social studies. In addition to attending seminars, the student may also meet individually with his/her teacher once a week for a conference. The conference provides an opportunity for the student to discuss his/her progress and problems and receive individual assistance. If a student chooses to operate on a totally independent basis and not attend classes or seminars, he/she must submit a proposal or in some way defend the value of the project. Individual conferences are scheduled for as often as a student and his/her teacher agree upon.

At the end of each grading period a degree of tension can be sensed. Often students frantically work to complete assignments and meet deadlines. Each student must schedule a private evaluation conference with the teacher of every class. Prior to the conference the student fills out a self-evaluation form listing all learning experiences and projects. Teachers ask each of their students, "What grade do **you** think you deserve?" Students are asked to evaluate their performance based on contract fulfillment. This is a difficult process for many students due to the transfer of ownership and responsibility. In most school situations students are rarely asked to assess their own performance. Staff members find students to be amazingly accurate in assessing their strengths and weaknesses. Statements like "I could have done it, but I just kept putting it off" or "I really blew it this six weeks" demonstrate students' ability to accept responsibility for failure instead of transferring the blame to others or circumstances. Conversely, when a student is successful, he/she can take ownership and feel a sense of contribution and a personal pride in achievement.

This process can also be difficult for teachers due to the confrontation element involved. If there is a strong disagreement, both teacher and student are faced with defending their positions, and a process of negotiation begins. Evaluation in the alternative program is on a very direct and personal level in comparison to the traditional classroom. Staff members and students must divorce themselves from close personal relationships in order to objectively evaluate progress. It should also be noted that teacher evaluation by students is actively encouraged. This kind of honest exchange promotes positive growth and change.

The evaluation is a turning point, like New Years or a birthday, when one period of growth and learning ends and another begins. It is a time to reflect on work and achievement, evaluate what has been accomplished, and assess what needs to be accomplished or improved in the next unit of study. This diagnostic/prescriptive method enables students to concentrate on areas of weakness or desired growth.

And so the process begins again . . .

What Goes Into A Contract?

I. Deciding What is to be Learned

a. **Developing Academic Standards:** minimum-maximum requirements; practical survival skills; manual skills; facts and knowledge; process skills (learning how to learn); affective confluent skills; expanded awareness-content appreciation; concept development; application.

b. **Systematizing Standards:** creating a structure and procedure; writing standards in measureable-understandable terms; helping the student know when he has finished leading to realistic self-evaluation and teacher evaluation.

c. **Establishing Acceptable Criteria:** norm reference; criterion reference; absolute levels of performance; How much is enough? How am I doing compared to what?

II. Diagnosis-Assessment

a. **Development of Instrument:** selection of procedures to evaluate skills and knowledge of entry.

b. **Making Process and Content Curricular Decisions:** based on diagnosis and input from parents and students to identify needs, goals, or special strengths.

III. Resource Identification (Where and How Can the Student Attain Competency)

a. **Content Sources:** text: library resources; workbook; related print and media materials; guest guests experts; related community events and activities; related movie, television, magazines, etc.

b. **Process Options:** lecture, drill small group discussion, one-on-one tutoring, peer tutoring, project, independent study, experential-community based, guest presentation, simulation, field trip, exhibits, intensives, internships.

c. **Determining Learning Style:** most effective teaching model; response to teacher pressure and freedom; intensive vs. paced effort; democratic vs. autocratic classroom; allowing for individual styles.

d. **Design of Learning Activity Package:** includes content, process, style, and resources

IV. Setting a Timetable

a. **Establishing Benchmarks:** deadlines; when is it due?

b. **Aids for Self-pacing:** showdown dates, formative evaluation dates, final evaluation date.

V. Defining the Rationale (What is the Payoff to the Student)

a. **Clarifying Rewards, Reinforcement, Punishment, Consequences:** grades, awards, failure, course credit skills, knowledge, relation of material to other subject areas, practical application, graduation, reports to parents, intrinsic value of skills and content, college preparation and career implication.

b. **Establishing Long-Range Value of the Course:** college preparation; basic life survival skills; affective growth; vocational-career preparation; preparation for related advanced courses in a sequence; preparation for SAT, AP, and National Merit.

VI. Evaluation

a. **List of Optional Strategies for Student Display of Competence:** written essay or book report, oral report, test, project, criterion reference task completion, learning contract completion, attendance, class discussion, affective growth.

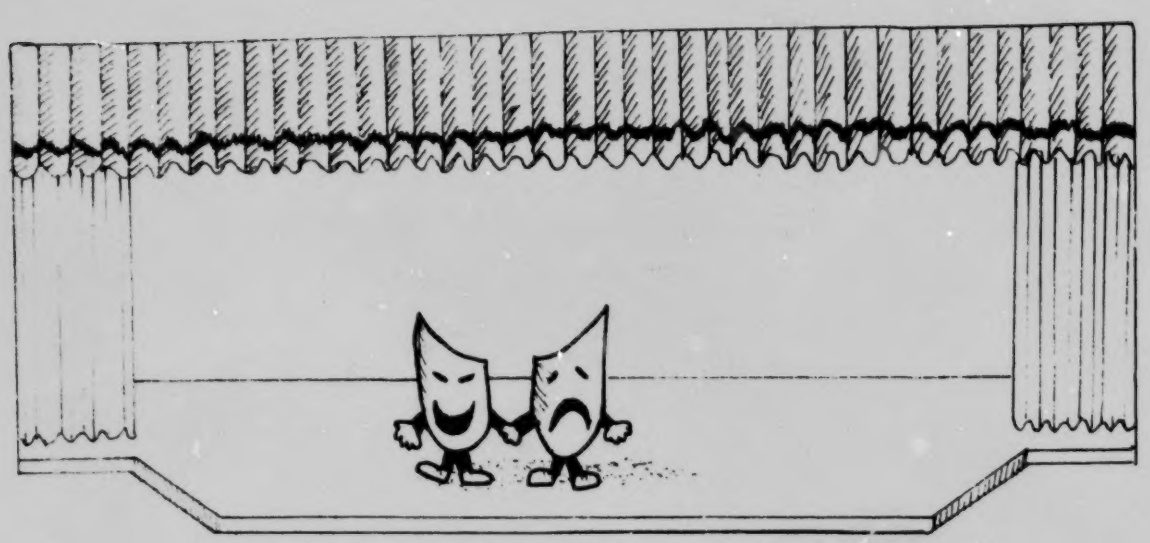
b. **Levels of Performance Detailed:** taxonomy of quantity and qualtiy of competence.

VII. Negotiated Learning Contract

a. **Securing a Commitment:** teacher, parent, and student sign.

b. Transfer of Ownership of Learning From Teacher to Student

c. **Contract Terms Include:** details all of the six previously listed (academic content, process, diagnosis, timetable, evaluation procedures)



A Student Writes A Contract

Characters: Jay—A teacher in an alternative program

Sue—A high school student

Setting: A classroom divided with a folding curtain; on one wall is a blackboard covered with assignments, messages, and newspaper clippings. There are five desks separated by various homemade bookshelves and portable bulletin boards. As the curtain rises, the spotlight moves in on the desk in Stage Center where a teacher sits grading papers. The desk is cluttered with papers sorted into three piles, books, a droopy plant, and a coffee cup.

ACT I

A student enters stage left, walks up to the teacher's desk with paper in hand and sits next to the desk.

J: Hello, Sue. How are you today?

S: Hi, Jay. Fine, I think. It depends on whether or not you think this contract looks all right. I've been working on it for a few days.

J: O.K. Let's take a look. (Teacher takes a contract and looks at it carefully.) I see you've included the class requirements of two general goals from the U.S. History minimum requirements which is certainly the first step. (Pause) Why are you planning to read **Blue Collar?**

S: I've been interested in labor relations and a couple of weeks ago I visited the home of Eugene Debs with my brother. My brother left the book at home, so I decided to read it. I thought it would be an interesting topic.

J: Fine. I think you'll find it thought provoking, especially if you have not studied it before. What topic in current events do you want to follow? I think it would be better if you concentrated

on one or two areas and complete some in-depth research rather than try to keep up with everything.

S: Well, I was thinking about the anti-draft movement, but I have changed to Salt II. It's a major issue now, but I'm not really aware of everything involved.

J: You might also concentrate on labor relations in the news since you will be reading **Blue Collar.** I see you are still pursuing the Appalachian Regional Commission project. How did your interview go?

S: It was great! The man I talked to was really nice. He spent about an hour explaining the role of ARC, how it was formed and what's been accomplished. He gave a lot of materials. I'm still interested in working in the Applachian area sometime.

J: Good, I'm glad your interview went so well. You might want to share the information with other students when you're finished with the report. O.K., explain the purpose for your visit to the State Capitol

S: After visiting the capitol in Washington, D.C., I thought it would be interesting to see the State Capitol. I've lived in this state all my life, but I've never been down to see it.

J: That sounds like a good idea, but we can't count it as a community project unless you do some kind of research or comparison study.

S: (Makes a facial expression indicating a negative response.)

J: Or if that doesn't sound interesting you can go but count it only as a visitation. What about this evaluation section? Why did you leave it blank?

S: I really don't understand that part of the contract, Jay.

J: It basically means how will we evaluate you? What criteria will be used in order to decide on a grade.

S: (Pauses and looks over the contract) The first thing would be completion of all my objectives, I guess. Also, the quality of my work is important, and I'd like to improve my writing skills on the reports.

J: O.K. I'll be glad to help you with that. Why don't you discuss rough drafts with me or plan to do revisions of your reports if necessary.

S: (Nods her head.)

J: The only thing left now is the due dates. Why don't you set up a time table for yourself?

S: Last time I waited until the last week to do my history goals and I'm **not** going to let that happen again! I **hate** cramming. (She looks at calendar and starts writing on the calendar.)

Lights fade.

Act II

Six weeks later.

Same room. Teacher is standing at cabinet filing papers. Sue walks in from stage Right, looking tired.

J: Hey, Sue, How's it going?

S: Terrible. I was up half the night studying for my English final, and I'm exhausted. But anyway—here's my evaluation.

J: (Takes evaluation form and begins to read) The first thing I need to know is whether or not you completed everything in the contract.

S: Yes.

J: And I think I have all assignments. (He looks through a folder.) You did turn in everything?

S: Sure did.

J: Is there anything on the contract that you did not do?

S: Well, I did the assignments, but I didn't meet my deadlines. Some things were late.

J: Is there any particular reason for that?

S: No, I didn't have any problems, just my usual behind-schedule pace.

J: O.K. (He smiles) Sue, what do you feel was the most valuable learning experience for you this grading period?

S: Probably the currents events seminar. Now I'm more aware of what's going on. Before I just glanced at the newspaper and read the entertainment section. But now I really follow stories from day to day, not only in the paper, but also on TV. I even found a lot of things in the news about labor relations and the Appalachian region which tied in with my other projects. Last week I saw a super documentary film called . . .

J: I enjoyed your report on **Blue Collar**. It was informative and well written. I think revising it helped. You check that you completed "adequate" work. Why?

S: Well, I spent a fair amount of time on history. It was challenging for me, but it wasn't too difficult.

J: What problems did you encounter?

S: Sometimes I didn't feel very motivated to get started. You know it's spring and that makes it difficult to study. So I guess procrastination is my main problem. Like most people in the program, I tend to hand in things at the last minute which makes it hard on the teachers . . .

J: I can agree with that. Although, I've been know to procrastinate, too! (He smiles) How would you describe your work for this six weeks, Sue? What letter grade would you say is a fair assessment?

S: I would say it's above average, probably a "B". I think I was close to an "A" this time because I accomplished everything, but most things were turned in late and meeting deadlines was part of my contract. Also, I was not satisfied with the quality of my ARC report. It just didn't cover all the information well enough. I probably should have revised it.

J: I would agree with your evaluation. I do see some improvement in your writing skills and I think you are more self-directed now. I think you've done a good job. What would you like to concentrate on next fall?

S: I really want to include more community experiences. I'd like to have more interviews and possibly set up an internship. I seem to learn more if it's a first hand experience.

J: Great. Maybe you can get some ideas or possible contacts this summer.

S: Yeah, that's a good idea. Well, gotta go. I really need to study some more for my final. I hate cramming! Why do I do this to myself?

J: Shrugs his shoulders and shakes head and smiles as Sue gathers materials.

Lights fade
Curtain closes

Some Related Samples

Semester Requirements For Sue's U.S. History Class

1. Two exams each semester: midterm—at end of nine weeks
   semester—test week at end of semester.
2. All objectives must be completed to pass course.
3. At least two writing pieces per six weeks (2-3 pages).
4. One major project of your choice each semester.
5. Independent study can be an option after the first six weeks grading period. (for one six weeks each semester)
6. Two pre-tests will be given at the beginning of the year.
7. Each student must attend a seminar (class) each six weeks unless independent study has been approved.
8. For the first six weeks each student will have a short individual conference with me once a week. Starting the second six weeks, conferences will be scheduled by me or upon request of the student.
9. Each student must sign in each day on the sheets by my desk.
10. Any contract which is not completed by the due dates for contracts, will be considered late and subject to a lower six weeks grade.
11. Each student must have two community experiences during the semester, one ongoing internship lasting at least ten weeks.

GENERAL GOAL 11 How Has The United States Changed Since World War II? (1945 to the present)

Minimum Performance Objectives

11.1.1 Student must be able to (SMBAT) identify two (2) social, two (2) economic, and two (2) political changes since World War II.
11.2.1 SMBAT cite two (2) reasons for the development of the Cold War.
11.2.2 SMBAT define collective security and identify three (3) areas in the world where America is committed to this concept.
11.2.3 SMBAT compare and contrast our involvement in Korea and Vietnam.
11.3.1 SMBAT give an example of the role of the federal government in each of the following areas: education, health, housing, consumer protection, transportation, and civil rights.
11.4.1 SMBAT locate and spell correctly the fifty states.
11.5.1 SMBAT define or give an example of the following terms: ecology, welfare, big government, arms race, and energy crisis.

GENERAL GOAL 12 What Is The Meaning of America?

Minimum Performance Objectives

12.1.1 SMBAT cite three (3) major examples to illustrate our concern for the individual in our society.
12.2.1 SMBAT re-define the term "democracy" and cite three (3) specific examples showing how our Constitution has allowed us to adapt to change.
12.3.1 SMBAT express their interpretation of the American Dream.
12.4.1 SMBAT speculate on what changes should occure in the future and what their own role should be.

Student Learning Contract

STUDENT Sue Schneider

TEACHER Jay Hill SUBJECT U. S. History

DATE May 8, 1979 SEMESTER 2 GRADING PERIOD 3

OBJECTIVES:
General goals 11 & 12
Current events seminar - Salt II
Read Blue Collar (internal exam of working world)
Follow-up paper on ARC interview
Visit the State Capital - VISITATION

ACTIVITIES:
Follow news media on Salt II for seminar
Read Blue Collar - do follow-up report
Write a paper on Appalachian Reg. Commission
Visit State Capital

Do you plan to utilize the community on an ongoing basis as part of your academic credit? YES ✓ NO _____. If YES, a community contract must be attached and evaluation submitted to receive credit for the activity.

TIME:

1. Regular individual conference times with teacher Friday, period 2
2. Seminar meeting times Mon. & Wed. pd 2
3. Length of contract 6 weeks

EVALUATION: Accuracy and quality, completion by due dates, writing accuracy (grammar & content)

List Challenge Areas covered by activities in this learning contract, (at least two IN ADDITION TO cognitive skills)

STUDENT Sue Schneider

TEACHER Jay Hill

PARENT Dorothea Schneider

SIX WEEKS EVALUATION/SEMESTER

NAME Sue Schneider

DATE May 15, 1979

1. What materials, books, movies, etc., have you used this six weeks?
   Blue Collar
   newspaper
   U.S. History text
   "The changing Region" (movie)
   literature from A.R.C.
2. What activities have you used to achieve your objectives and goals?
   Read Blue Collar – wrote follow up paper
   Interviewed Mr. Brown at ARC in Wash. D.C.
   Read article on Salt II, attended seminar, wrote paper,
3. What activities did you fail to complete on this contract? visited State capital
   none

4. Did you work to your full potential, all things considered? yes

5. Was this contract—
   too much work_____ not enough work_____ adequate work ✓

6. Please fill in the following information:
   1st six weeks grade _____ 3rd six weeks grade_____
   2nd six weeks grade ____ semester grade _____

7. Explain why you feel you deserve the grade you have given yourself for the 3rd six weeks (be sure to return all written materials you have produced so I can have them to use in evaluating your work).
   I worked hard this 6 weeks and completed everything I contracted to do. I now read the paper everyday, which is something I did not do before this six weeks. I have a basic understanding of labor and labor unions. This stems from the reading I did this six weeks. I completed my general goals thoroughly!

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Few students are mature enough to make academic decisions; what if they fail or make unwise or unrealistic decisions regarding their academic endeavors?

Students are ill-equipped initially to make academic decisions. Development of this skill is one of the goals of the program. The academic direction for each course is decided through a negotiation process which includes input from the teacher (course requirements and testing for skill assessment), and parent (based on parents' perception of student needs).

Including the student and parent in academic decisions increases the involvement and commitment on the part of the student. It also gives the student an organizational format which encourages life-long learning, whether in a formal or informal learning setting, by teaching the skills of goal setting, process selection, resource identification and linking, self-assessment, time management, and self-evaluation.

Initially, most students set unreasonable, unrealistic goals (generally too ambitious). However, students who have participated in the program for some time become very adept in assessing what they need, how and where to get it, and in setting up a timetable that is reasonable in helping them pace themselves for contract completion.

Explain how you can stress the affective skill development without sacrificing the basics and academic content.

Our first and primary concern is the cognitive and basic academic skill areas. This direction reflects student and parental demands for college preparatory and career skills. The tasks to accomplish the development of affective skills are woven into the fulfillment of academic requirements in a confluent manner. The program is organized so that affective and academic areas become not an either-or dichotomy, but one and the same.

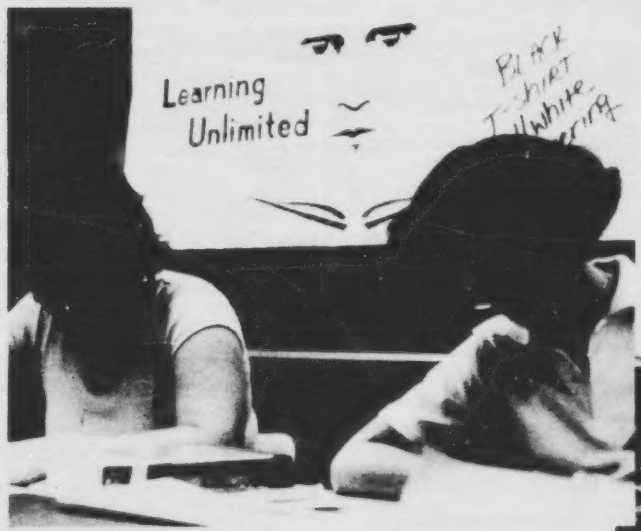
Should either area be stressed to the neglect of the other, then the process is out of balance and is regularly corrected by the parent and the teacher monitoring process. Both parents and students (enthusiastically) report on growth in affective as well as academic areas. Affective growth may receive more attention because documentation and evaluation of affective areas is unique among educational institutions.

I can understand how one can create classroom options and alternative learning processes in some subjects, but what about skill areas like math, foreign language, etc.? It seems to me there is no way of avoiding the drill and rigors of mastering sequential academic content.

Some academic areas, by nature, are more adaptable to the use of classroom options. For others, there appears to be no substitute for rigorous drill, memorization, lecture, etc. There is little question regarding the academic skills and content to be required of all students in some areas. In these areas, our classes deviate very little from traditionally accepted approaches. Certainly our goal or the end product is the same as other programs in the school. The methods used in order to respond to individual needs or learning styles might vary. Philosophically we conclude: "the students learn the same things, but may learn them in different ways".

Since most North Central High School students are college bound, how does Learning Unlimited prepare them for college?

College preparation is a major concern of our program since a majority of our students are college bound. Program graduates now in college report that the program was helpful in developing composition skills, other basic academic skills, self direction, time management, and in the identification and use of extra classroom resources. They reported that by exploring careers while in high school through the use of the community they felt a stronger commitment to college as an appropriate avenue to a career.



From classroom to community,

from theory to practice . . .

CHAPTER FOUR
COMMUNITY LEARNING

Living and Learning In The Adult World

Making the Indianapolis community a part of the learning process has remained an important goal of **Learning Unlimited.** The program staff and students believe that the community based experiences provide a link between learning and life that makes school more meaningful and more exciting. The following provide an effective rationale for using the community as a learning resource:

LEARNING COMES ALIVE—community experiences make the abstract philosophies and dry facts of any discipline more concrete. Often, when a subject area takes on life, students **want** to learn more about it. Community experiences often stimulate reading and research on a topic.

LEARNING CAN OCCUR ANYWHERE—Students often discount valuable learning simply because it does not take place **in** a school. Community based learning helps students see that learning is a constant process, not confined to books and classroom discussion. Often a concrete experience will crystallize an academic concept.

THE INTERRELATIONSHIPS OF THE DISCIPLINES—Life cannot be divided into neatly labeled packages; neither can learning. Approaching learning in an interdisciplinary manner is more exciting, more sensible, but probably more difficult. Community experiences illustrate well the integration of the disciplines — the futility of fragmenting learning into self-contained units of knowledge.

CAREER EXPLORATION—Students need to explore the world of work if they are to make effective career decisions.

VOLUNTEER SERVICE—Community based learning gets students out of the narrow confines of the school into a world that needs all the help it can get. Whether students become involved in community service or community action projects, their youthful vitality may offer a fresh perspective to adults working in the field.

SELF IMAGE—An adolescent's degree of success is often unfairly measured by his performance at school. A community experience may cause a student to re-evaluate his perception of him/herself. An unsuccessful student in the classroom may perform competently in an internship. On the other hand, a model student may learn the hard way that knowledge is of dubious value without the ability to communicate effectively with people.

NEW RELATIONSHIPS WITH TEACHERS—When students use the community as a learning resource, the role of the teacher changes. He/she becomes more a faciliator, guide, and partner in the learning process, helping students structure meaningful learning experiences and helping them learn to evaluate their work more objectively.

TRANSITIONS FROM ADOLESCENCE TO ADULTHOOD—Breaking out of the isolated classroom into the community often helps students escape some of the stultifying patterns of adolescence. Working with adults in a collequial relationship decreases the likelyhood of polarization between generations. To learn in the community, students take on new responsibilities and learn to operate in the "real world." Juggling classwork and community commitments, they learn to set priorities and to communicate their needs effectively to adults.

LIFE LONG LEARNERS—Students involved in programs which offer a balance of academic and concrete learning experiences often leave school with a love of learning which colors their whole lives. They internalize learning as a personal value and need neither grades nor diplomas to give it meaning.

Types of Community Experiences

Learning Unlimited students and staff have experimented with a variety of types of community learning, ranging from one time experiences to total immersion models. The following glossary of community experiences may help you find the right level of involvement for students in your school:

COMMUNITY ACTION: Community action projects are designed to bring about a change in the community. Perhaps students would like to clean up the air in their neighborhood or investigate the possibility of political graft. Community action projects can make good things happen and give students a fine sense of community and accomplishment, but Joe Nathan of the St. Paul Open School offered these four pointers for teachers to keep in mind when considering involvement in a community action project:

1. If the project has the potential of creating a controversy, be sure that your school administrators are aware of what you are doing so they may anticipate any repercussions.
2. Students need to learn to think through the consequences of the investigations they are undertaking. They may need some direction in assessing the political realities of "picking your enemies." (It is not a good idea to try to put the company funding your program out of business!)

Research on street repairs

Working at the zoo or Eagle Creek.

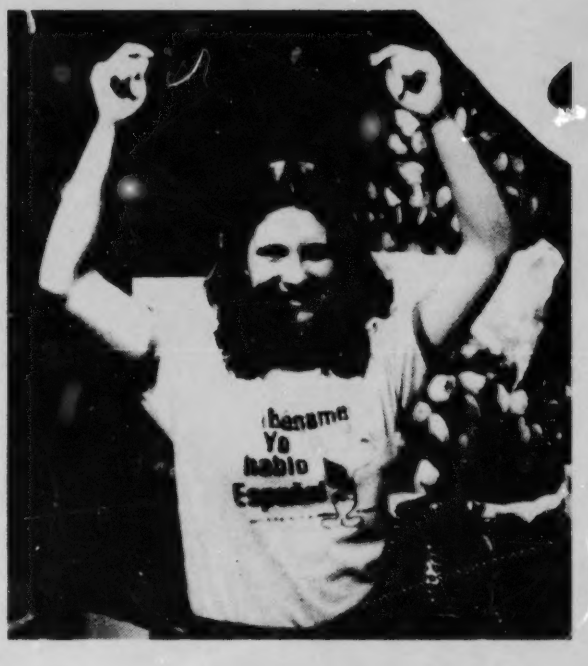
3. Teachers cannot always lead students to do things—some decisions and directions must come from their own through exploration.
4. Political naivete can be very destructive—exercise caution.

COMMUNITY CLASSES: Community classes are taught by community resource people. They may meet on a weekly or bi-weekly basis and generally take place away from the school—usually at the instructor's place of business. When planning community classes, it is crucial to have a clear understanding with the resource person of what he or she will teach, for students earning part of their academic credit for such classes need to know what will be covered in order to plan their contracts.

To avoid certification questions, any class offered for credit should be directly supervised and coordinated by a certified teacher on the staff. In most cases, community classes are best offered as one enriching facet to a credit course rather than as a separate, credit-earning entity. A competency based curriculum is easily adapted to community classes: it is often easy to design a community class to meet a specific competency.

Learning Unlimited has offered such community classes as "Creative Writing" at the Saturday Evening Post and "Law for the Lay Person" at the Legal Services Organization.

EXCHANGES: In an exchange, a student immerses him/herself totally in a divergent culture. He/she becomes a part of a family away from familiar surroundings with the goal of gaining insight into a different way of life. Exchanges can vary in length of stay and distance from home. A long visit to a foreign country may not be a great deal more enlightening than living a while in a radically different neighborhood in your own city.

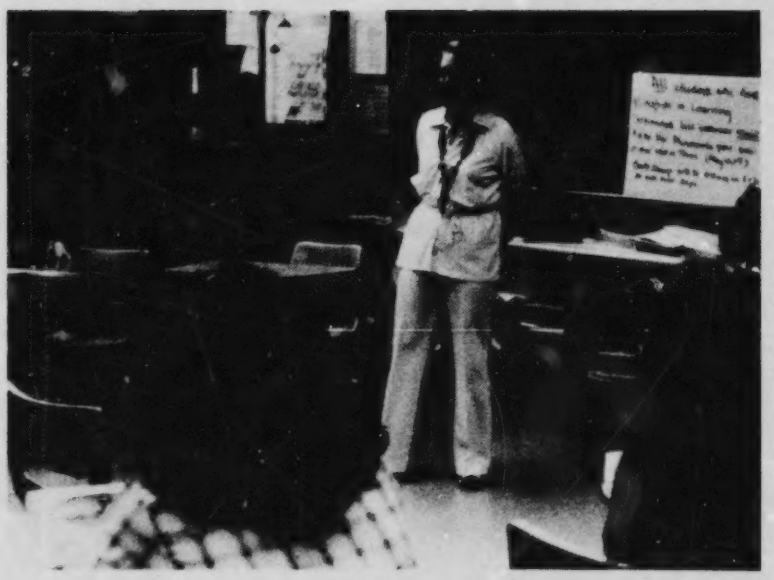


An exchange is not the same as a vacation; in fact, the real benefits of an exchange don't begin until a person has seen all the sights and become accustomed to those elements of a culture that make it different than his/her own. For maxium benefit, an exchange must be long enough for the novelty to wear off, and for his/her host family to fall back into its normal daily routines.

Learning Unlimited sponsored an exchange program with the Rough Rock Demonstration School at the Navajo Reservation at Rough Rock, Arizona.

FIELD TRIPS: On a field trip, a group of students, usually accompanied by a teacher, visit a place in the community to enrich their academic experience. Field trips are short, lasting just a day or part of a day and they are usually planned with a specific goal in mind. For field trips to be most effective, teachers must give students the responsibility for planning and executing meaningful out-of-school experiences.

Learning Unlimited students have visited such community sites as the Women's Prison, State Archives, Coca Cola Bottling plant, Indiana Repertory Theater rehearsals and performances, Indianapolis Museum of Art and the War Memorial.



Magical Mystery Tour: A staff member may place a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board listing only the day, time and what the student should bring. Magical mystery tours are designed purely for enrichment, spontaneity and adventure; they go places a student probably would not visit on his/her own like a glass blowing factory or a tour of the "bowels" of an amusement park.

GUEST SPEAKERS: Guest speakers may be used on a one time basis to enrich an academic area being studied or may take an active part in student planned academic activities. For instance, a stockbroker might counsel economics students on their hypothetical investments in the stock market.

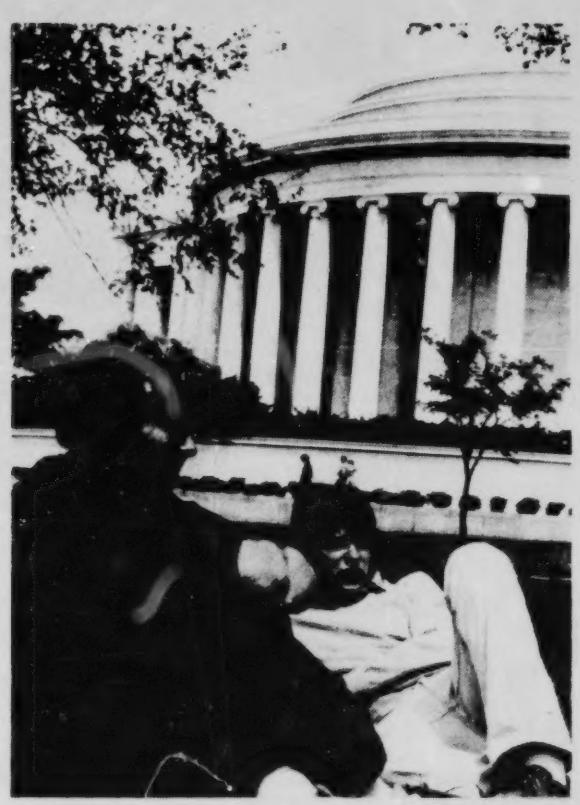
Learning Unlimited students and staff have also used resource people to teach practical non-academic survival skills and experimented with structuring a complete course around a series of guest speakers. A pilot elective course "The Emerging American Woman" was offered on a weekly basis for a whole semester, each one hour session on an issue relating to women was presented by a different community resource person. Topics such as "HerStory," "Women in Politics" and "The Psychology of Women: Are They Really Different From Men?" were among those offered. Program students wrote the seminar into their learning contracts to gain credit in one or several of their courses. Similarly constructed courses were offered in comparative religion and international culture.

INTENSIVE: An intensive is a learning experience away from the school setting that may last from several days to a number of weeks and may be taken by groups of students or individuals with or without teachers. As with other types of community experiences, intensives are most effective when students play a major part in setting goals, planning the itinerary, and raising funds for the trips. Teachers Jay Hill and Freddi Stevens-Jacobi produced a 16mm color film covering all aspects of designing an intensive.*

The shape of an intensive depends on the interests and creativity of the people involved. Some are initiated by teachers, some by students or parents. But in each case, they should be geared to specific learning activities. Groups that traveled to a Navajo reservation in Rough Rock, Arizona had specific goals in sociology and psychology as well as a unique teaching opportunity. A Florida intensive was designed to bring alive the traditional marine biology curriculum. Students visiting Washington D.C. went with history and government goals in mind. Those who visited New York focused on the humanities. Students in a government class traveled to the New Hampshire primary to campaign for Birch Bayh.

The following set of guidelines was developed by **Learning Unlimited** to facilitate planning for intensives.

RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES FOR INTENSIVES



Announcements of Intensives:

Announce at least one month in advance by VFA, VFB, posted announcement in eduplex, staff members.

Announcement should include: where, when, length of trip, transportation approximate cost, prerequisite for student, information about student selection process.

Student Selection Process:

Screen students who don't meet prerequisites (ex., scuba for marine biology)

Written application

Teacher or Committee interview

Lottery after initial prerequisite screening

Academic planning for intensives:

Teacher sponsor should contact other teachers for IDS ideas (staff meeting, IDS committee)*

Involve students making contracts for intensive and planning itinerary.

Students will write on IDS contract for intensives (see forms)

Attach to contract a brief itinerary and parental permission statement.

Informing parents

Plan meeting with students, parents and sponsors, providing the following information:

Itinerary (area description, activities planned)

Contact person at sight of intensives (Name, address, phone number)

Explanation of transportation, insurance coverage, cost, lodging, unsupervised activities, risks involved, etc.

Have students carry medical information (Dr. name, phone number)

Planning for students remaining at school

Sponsor should provide the following for his/her students:

A person the students can check in with.

A person responsible for seminars.

A person who the students can contact concerning questions and problems relating to their course.

A teachers master schedule of the student—teacher meeting times, seminars and location of each.

Systematic ways of sharing intensives:

Telelecture (establish prior to leaving)

follow up seminars open to students, staff, parents, and administration.

Slide presentations.

Newspaper articles (VFB, Northernlights, community newspaper)

Presentation to regular classes.

Presentation to family groups.

Community speaking engagements.

Follow up study

Teacher sponsor and students should plan a follow up study with recommendations for other intensives.

*IDS Interdisciplinary Studies

INTERNSHIP: An internship, like an apprenticeship, gives a student the opportunity to experience how a business, agency, or institution operates. Different from a field trip or observation, the internship places a student in a position of responsibility appropriate to his/her own learning needs and the needs of the community resource person who agrees to help him/her.

An internship can provide an opportunity for career exploration or can offer enrichment to textbook learning. In either case, it is most effective when undertaken on a fairly long-term basis as it is crucial that the student take on real responsibilities and become a contributing member of the "team". One visit per week for most of a semester is a minimum if students are to gain much satisfaction from an internship experience. Also important is scheduling the internship during a fairly large time block like most of a morning or afternoon so that students can get a feeling for the daily routine.

Usually **Learning Unlimited** students arrange their own internships, though they must gain approval from their teacher(s) and arrange for an evaluation by the resource person if they plan to earn credit for the experience. In planning an internship it is crucial that each party is aware of the other's expectations. A good contract clarifies the commitments and is an effective simple means of record-keeping. It is also helpful to the resource person to have the name of a staff member to call if difficulties arise.

INTERVIEWS: Learning Unlimited students use the interview as an effective information gathering tool. They have interviewed people to gain a deeper insight in an area of research; they have also interviewed people as a part of their English communications competency. In some cases, interviews are developed further to fulfill writing requirements.

SERVICE PROJECTS: Learning Unlimited students have worked in nursing homes, hospitals museums, schools, and day care centers. They have worked in political campaigns and at the polls on election day. They have collected books for the library at the Women's Prison, spent the night at the Repertory Theater pulling down sets and building new ones to be ready in time for the opening night and organized clean-up projects.

There is no limit to the variety of service projects students can become involved in either as individuals or groups. Often competencies can be fulfilled through these kinds of experiences.

STUDENT PUBLICATIONS: The Foxfire Project in Rabun Gap, Georgia is the model used by most alternative schools which sponsor student-published books or magazines. Foxfire adapts well to nearly any kind of community for it has at the base of its philosophy, a strong respect for human tradition and a healthy curiosity about the world.

Learning Unlimited students have experimented twice with such publications. During the program's first and second years, a group of students published **Tapestry**, a magazine modeled directly on Foxfire. The next year, students in an English seminar published a magazine "**On the Job**". The magazine, which contained interviews and photographs of Indianapolis citizens at work was fashioned after Studs Terkel's **Working.**

An important thing to remember when developing a Foxfire type project is that the crux of such a program is the learning **process**; the publication is a fortunate by-product.

WALKABOUT: Learning Unlimited students are encouraged to create Walkabout challenges which will take them from the protective confines of home and school. One student interested in a career in radio or television traveled alone to Chicago to attend the National Broadcasters Convention. Another student spent six weeks during the summer recreating the famous conservationist, John Muir's walk from Indiana to Florida. Three students, inspired by Mark Twain's **Huckleberry Finn,** built a raft and took a week long "floatabout" down the Ohio River.

Setting up a workable community learning program takes a great deal of organization, a lot of common sense, and a **lot** of footwork. Teachers and students in **Learning Unlimited** have always taken the major responsibility for planning their own community experiences, however the role of the challenge areas/community coordinator has been crucial to the program's community focus. With respect to community involvement, this person's role has been multi-faceted, ranging from planning group activities, to orienting students, to acting as a resource person or facilitator, to helping others put their ideas into action. The community coordinator planned community classes and group service projects; he/she also acted as the liason between students and community resources.

Having a community coordinator on the staff takes up the slack and makes a community focus more workable. In **Learning Unlimited**, the community coordinator always worked closely with students and staff and adapted the role when necessary to meet the changing needs of the individuals involved in the program. In an innovative program like **Learning Ulimited**, it is necessary to utilize teachers in nontraditional roles. The role of community coordinator cannot be neatly categorized as that of teacher or administrator. The job is one which demands a competent professional—one with a background in learning theory and methodology as well as strong organizational skills.

The following questions are ones commonly asked by people interested in the logistics of putting together a workable community learning program.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

HOW CAN I FIND RESOURCE PEOPLE WHO WILL TAKE THE TIME TO WORK WITH MY STUDENTS?

You can start by making some phone calls and examining literature from your local Chamber of Commerce. Calling such local institutions as museums, hospitals and other schools can help identify key persons for students to contact if they want to plan an experience. Most Chambers of Commerce have information on city landmarks of educational significance. Relatives, friends and acquaintances can offer valuable information and resources. Remember, one good contact is like a pebble thrown into a pond—referrals and suggestions from that person will trigger innumerable possibilities.

As you develop and use community resources, it is a good idea to develop a resource file. A file is best built over a period of time and should reflect the input of the students who have made and worked with community contacts. It is best to keep a resource file simple. It should record the nature and quality of student's experiences and include evaluations of the setting. Though creating such a file takes time and effort, it is well worth your time for it makes life easier for everyone in the long run.

*HOW CAN I BE SURE THAT STUDENTS WILL HAVE **GOOD** EXPERIENCES IN THE COMMUNITY?*

To avoid misunderstandings which lead to problems, it is important to clarify goals and objectives both for students and resource people. A contract outlining expectations is a good idea. Remembering that the time these people have available is limited, probably the most effective method of orientation is with a short handbook or brochure and phone calls before, during, and after the experiences. It is important to maintain the right balance of contact with resource people—not so much that it interferes with their business, but enough that they feel assured that the school is concerned about the quality of the experience and the students' performance. In the case of a one-time experience, such as an interview or observation, a student can set up and follow through on his/her own experiences with little or no input from the school.

WON'T MOST PEOPLE SAY THEY'RE JUST TOO BUSY TO TAKE ON THE RESPONSIBILITY OF WORKING WITH HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS?

Surprisingly, most people respond positively to requests by teachers. Even though they may not be able to provide the exact service you request, they may offer to contribute time and effort in an area better suited to their talents or scheduling or they may refer you to an associate who might be able to help.

Those who have reservations are often concerned with the possibility of "red tape." While it is necessary to document students' experiences through contracts and evaluations, teachers should be careful not to demand any more "forms" than are absolutely necessary. Early in **Learning Unlimited's** evolution, the staff developed a beautiful set of color-coded, number-coded community forms. But no one used them because, in practice, they were quite unwieldy. Simplicty is the key word in developing a structure for documenting community learning!

WHAT ABOUT TRANSPORTATION?

Transportation **does** pose a problem for many alternative schools. During its first year of operation, **Learning Unlimited** used the program van for day to day transportation to community sites. With increased numbers, this became impractical and the program used the van only for group activities, providing school bus service twice a week to the downtown area. Eventually, transportation for individual projects was discontinued altogether, and students became responsible for arranging their own rides for community experiences. Since many students in Washington Township have access to cars at least part of the time, the transportation problem was not insurmountable. Students have used car-pooling quite effectively. Also, some parents have volunteered to help out.

Some schools have been able to make special arrangements with metropolitan transit systems for students to ride free or at reduced cost during school hours.

WHERE DO I STAND, LEGALLY, IF A STUDENT IS INJURED WHILE OUT IN THE COMMUNITY?

There is usually no legal precedent, no board policy and no handy administrative handbook for those who experiment with curricular innovations. Without the guidelines provided by a clear cut policy, making good curriculum changes depends on a teacher's ability to make intelligent situational decisions.

The following four "R"s are offered to assist teachers in planning and executing community based learning experiences:

REASON: Has the staff member taken reasonable precaution to make the activity as safe as possible? This means predicting obvious potential hazards and designing precautionary measures. Has the staff member behaved in a reasonable manner in designing and implementing the activity? For example: a reasonable person would not permit a parent who had obviously been drinking to drive students to a community-based field experience.

Rules — Are there laws, board policy, or school rules involved in the activity? Many times there are guiding policy statements or even legal precedents. These must be respected when there is clearly evidence of potential violation in a situation. For example: any paid employees (teachers or para-professionals) who transport students as a major part of their job description are required to have a chauffeur's license.

Responsibility — Has the staff member exhibited responsible action in designing and implementing an activity? This means designing a plan which includes informing students and parents of the safety hazards, designing rules, and enforcing penalties for rule infractions. The teacher in charge of an activity need not always be physically present but must have designed a plan and informed students and parents of the rules. For example: Any activity carried on near water should include a statement of the hazard, rules regarding swimming, and the teacher's responsibility for enforcing the rules.

Relationship — Has the staff member established a relationship with the students and parents so that student behavior in a situation can be predicted and parent reaction to unforeseen events anticipated? Where parent, student, and teacher relationships are intense, the responsibility becomes a shared process. This does not excuse the teacher from his/her legal duty; however, it does serve to minimize the parent reaction in the event of an accident. For example: a written permission should be obtained from parents for each activity. While this is meaningless in legal action, it does establish that parents were informed of the activity and granted consent. This written statement forces some communication between the staff member and the parent regarding the activity; may reduce the chances parents will initiate legal action; may favorably impress the courts should legal recourse be sought by the parent*

WON'T COMMUNITY BASED LEARNING WATER DOWN ACADEMIC STANDARDS?

Not necessarily! In a good community based learning program, students learn all the "basics" covered in a more traditional school. But they learn them in different ways, with less emphasis on superfluous information and more on practical application. Students in a program like **Learning Unlimited** take their basic book learning outside the school, augment it with community experiences and emerge with a broad view of a subject—one that is, in most cases, more relevant to their lives.

Developing a competency based curriculum also helps solve the problem of watered down standards. A competency based approach to basic skills is far more adaptable to new modes of learning than the traditional curriculum. Skills, unlike content, can be definitely measured—the student either does or does not master them.

WON'T SOME STUDENTS TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THEIR OUT OF SCHOOL TIME?

Probably. There are always students who experience chronic problems with the increased responsibilities in a program like **Learning Unlimited**—those who simply cannot handle the

freedom. There are also those who backslide on the first warm spring day. But in general, the percentage of students who take advantage of the program is very small. It is important that such a program be voluntary and that students who have proven themselves irresponsible be sent back to the traditional school or to a different option program which better fits their needs.

A student discipline board process can be an effective means of dealing with students who abuse their community privileges. Students are often harder on each other than an adult would be.

It is important that students understand the responsibilities they have to themselves, their school and the resource people who agree to help them. Resource people, especially, often shape their impression of the whole program based on their interaction with one or a few students and one bad experience may (whether it is fair or not) sour them on the whole idea of alternative education. When students feel a sense of ownership in the program, they take on the responsibility of public relations wherever they go.

HOW CAN I KEEP CONTROL OF MY CLASS IF THEY ARE ALL OVER THE CITY?

You probably can't—in a traditional sense, at least. Teachers working in a highly individualized program with a community focus must learn to trust their students—to give over the responsibility for learning to them. While a good sign-out system may help you avoid problems with the attendance office and cover you legally, the fact remains that you must let kids go—trust them to develop meaningful learning experiences and follow through on them. Ultimately it is the student who suffers from or is rewarded by his/her level of performance. Teachers can and should retain the responsibility for seeing that students continue to be challenged and should share their insights and expertise in the learning process.

HOW CAN I BEST DEAL WITH THE HOSTILITY TOWARD THIS NEW, SOMEWHAT UNUSUAL, LEARNING METHOD?

First, it is important to realize that a certain amount of hostility is not necessarily negative. Any thing innovative is bound to be controversial—in fact, school innovators would do well to keep in mind Mark Twain's amusing but very perceptive statement, "Whenever I find myself on the side of the majority, I know it is time to reform." The hostility itself is not a big problem—the key is how people handle the hostility directed at their program.

Hostility can come from administrators, teachers, custodians, parents, students and concerned citizens. It is best dealt with out in the open—immediate steps should be taken to establish a line of communication between program people and their critics. A systematic attempt to keep people informed may be helpful (newsletter, positive media coverage, service club programs, etc.) but even more valuable is a continuous output of positive information concerning the program through a network of well-informed program proponents. The best public relations are established on a one to one basis. When students operate competently in the community, people hear about it. A job well done and a lesson well learned are the best evidence of a program's worth. Staff and students' openness to constructive criticism and tolerance of others' educational philosophies also help create a positive image.

HOW DOES ONE EVALUATE COMMUNITY BASED LEARNING FAIRLY?

There is no simple answer to this question, for there are many issues to consider. Can it be

measured by giving a grade or assigning a point value? Should it be considered "extra credit" and considered a bonus, thus raising the earned grade? Can one discover its value through adding up hours, by testing, or through an interview? Who should assess the value, the teacher, student or resource person? What about the long term effects we have no way of identifying now?

Considering these questions, teachers and students have tried a variety of methods for evaluating, experiential learning. Considering the policies and politics of the system you work in, you will have to develop a system of evaluating students which fits your unique needs.

Evaluation **is** important! Soliciting feedback from resource people assures them that the alternative school is, in fact, a stable concerned institution. Also, evaluation encourages students to contemplate their experiences and try to understand them.

But teachers should keep in mind that though they may devise intricate systems of accounting for students' out of school experiences, ultimately these experiences cannot be evaluated with traditional methods of grading. Do what is necessary. If a grade must be given, figure out a way to do it fairly. The true value of such experiences is often veiled. Some day a student's high school experiences may surface and help determine the course of his/her life.

The community is rich in human and physical resources.

CHAPTER FIVE
PERSONALITIES

The People Who Make It Work

A good idea is nothing without the special people who take it off of paper and put it into action. Not just anyone can teach or learn in a program like **Learning Unlimited!** Though it is difficult to predict whether or not a person will succeed in such an environment, some personality traits and basic values seem to be common to the people who have participated successfully in the alternative program.

A Student Profile

What kind of student chooses to be part of the alternative program?

It is nearly impossible to generalize about the student population or their reasons for volunteering for program participation. Most of the students were successful previously. Most of them are not asking for an easier way or less commitment to learning. On the contrary, most students report the program requires more time and effort. A portion of the students have joined the program in response to a specific learning difficulty. Others have a

particular interest they would like to pursue or are anxious to work in the community.

Is alternative education for all students?

The spirit of trust, of family, of caring, of learning, of respect, **is** for all students. The emphasis on individual need is for all students. The emphasis on studying or living and doing **is** for all students. The flexibility inherent in the alternative program and the methodology teachers use in the learning process to create the best learning environment for each participant may appeal to a wide range of students but not necessarily to all students.

Is **Learning Unlimited** *for students with problems?*

Yes, for many; no for many — but who is it that doesn't have problems, really? Alternative education can be for any student: the alienated, the sophisticated, the apathetic, the average, the slow learner, the hyperactive, the over-anxious, or the exceptional. It is not a panacea for any of these students, but it may provide an atmosphere where they can survive better than in the conventional classroom setting. However, some students and parents demand, expect, and need the security of a traditional classroom.

What process is used for student selection?

In the early spring of each year announcements are made throughout the high school and junior high schools in the township that applications for **Learning Unlimited** are available. The application gives a brief explanation of the program and a tentative schedule of the upcoming semester. After completing the form each applicant is interviewed by a team of one to two students and a staff member. The purpose of the interview is twofold. First, the interviewers explain what the program really is and clearly define what the expectations for a student are. Secondly, the applicant is asked to explain his/her reasons for wanting to enroll in the program. Interviewers try to choose students who will benefit from the program, but as mentioned in question number one, that could be almost any type of student (i.e. highly motivated, low achiever, alienated, frustrated, bored . . .) The interviewing team reviews carefully the applicant's reason(s) for applying. If a student gives the impression that he/she is looking for an easy way out or a more flexible schedule to suit personal needs or wants, then he/she will not be selected. One teacher said that she looked for a student who has displayed responsibility either in or out of school and who is sincere in wanting a learning option such as independent study or a specific community experience. Teachers also ask for input from former teachers and counselors in order to make responsible decisions. It should be mentioned that returning students are also interviewed for re-entering the program at the end of the year. Re-entry is based on fulfillment of program and class requirements, utilization of the unique aspects of **Learning Unlimited** and individual progress. A few students have been refused re-entry.

How are students oriented to the program?

Since there are so many different components of **Learning Unlimited** several methods of orientation are used. Students are briefly introduced to available learning options, course offerings and program expectations during the selection process. Before school starts there are usually one to two days scheduled for an orientation workshop, so that students do not

feel totally lost the first few days of school. Orientation workshops, attended by students and parents have included get acquainted activities, family group meetings, diagnostic testing, contract writing sessions and individual conferences with teachers. After the third semester of operation **Learning Unlimited** students and staff developed a guide book to aid in-coming students called the **Learning Unlimited Footbook.*** Inside the illustrated **Footbook** one will find "Foot and Wagnall's Guide to Definitions and Terms, a dictionary guaranteed to explain the confusing definitions and wordy terms that have made our program so famous . . . (and) a lot of crusty jokes and tired parodies that have destroyed any fame or esteem that we had left over from either our wordy terms or concepts." Students entering the alternative program have found the book to be most helpful. Bombardment by terms such as contracts, competencies, enabling activities, etc. can be overwhelming to parents and students in the beginning.* Retreats are another form of orientation that have been very successful. Retreats, usually scheduled in the early fall or spring, provide an opportunity for staff and students to deal with program concepts and frustrations away from the school setting. Spending a weekend in the woods together—hiking, playing games, participating in workshops, singing around the campfire—promotes a special community spirit or commaraderie that is difficult to achieve at school. After a retreat people return to school exhausted from lack of sleep and overuse of muscles, but with a real sense of belonging.

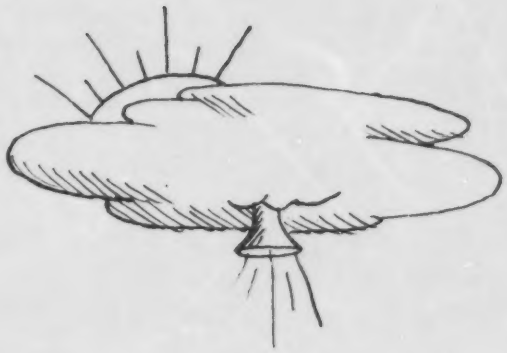
With such a highly individualized program offering so many options and activities how is everyone involved kept informed?

Because alternative students and staff go in so many different directions this can be a real problem. **Learning Unlimited** participants have devised (sometimes borrowed) and used several methods to facilitate communication which include the following:

Mailboxes—Student mailboxes were created from empty boxes with dividers. (Liquor boxes are perfect for this.) Mailboxes were used for interprogram communication—graded papers, assignments, telephone messages from community resources, or surprises from friends or secret admirers like gum, flowers, stale twinkies . . .

Message Board—A message board for general program announcements may be a calendar of activities placed on a bulletin board or blackboard. This kind of organizer helps to avoid conflict with scheduling guest speakers, field trips using the program van, etc. (Hint: Use a large sheet of paper for each day and as one week ends add a week of the following month so that four weeks are shown at all times.)

Voice From Above (VFA)—In addition to the regular program's daily announcements alternative students developed the VFA, **Learning Unlimited** announcements presented twice a week in a radio show format with music, commercials, feature stories, and some "weird" entertainment relating to **Learning Unlimited** activities. The VFA provided students with an opportunity to explore the field of radio broadcasting.



Voice From Below (VFB)—A student newspaper developed and written by students in 1975 informing students, parents and teachers of various program activities including general announcements, available community experiences, and family group schedules. It also served as a showcase for creative writing by students.

Memory Book—The Memory Book is designed to reflect the individuality and creativity of each person in the program. Each student and staff member creates one page sharing messages, favorite quotes, picture, or artwork, that reflects his/her experience in the alternative program. There is no fee for contributing a page, but a nominal charge is made to cover printing costs. (Note: If photographs are black and white, and if all writing is done in black ink on white paper then printing can be done by photostat very inexpensively.)

Family Group—Students and parents belong to a "family group" supervised by a staff member. The family groups meet regularly to provide a forum for communicating program policies and activities and to discuss problems. This meeting provides the parents with an opportunity to gain more information and to express their concerns and ideas. Student-teacher meetings are scheduled on a weekly basis and are often used as a time to eat together, play volleyball, discuss program frustrations or just enjoy each other's company. The student-teacher-parent meetings, held on a monthly basis, often take the form of picnics or pitch-in dinners. As the program has increased in size and become more credible (i.e. not as new and therefore questionable) in the community, family groups are not as active as in the beginning. Some staff and students see this as a loss because family groups provided an effective communication network and gave parents and students alike a personal, concrete tie to the alternative program.

How are students involved in program policy-making?

Town Meeting—Town Meeting is a weekly forum of students and staff in which issues of importance are discussed. The meeting is conducted in an orderly fashion (well, most of the time) by the student director and follows a student-created agenda. The format of the Town Meeting

has evolved with the program reflecting needs and concerns. During the second year when most participants were experiencing growing pains, debates arose over the level of commitment of part-time students—how much could the alternative program legislate, how much was a matter of personal choice. In the 1978-79 school year guest speakers were invited weekly to talk on relevant topics such as alcoholism, radio broadcasting, religious movements, politics, abortion, child abuse, etc.

Student Director—In 1976 the first student director was elected by **Learning Unlimited** students to be the program director's assistant. The student director(s) tasks include attending weekly staff meeting, carrying out some administrative duties, and acting as liaison between staff and students.

DISCIPLINE REVIEW BOARD

Purpose: The purpose of this board is to settle, in a fair and democratic manner, both disciplinary and domestic problems **within** the Program **(Learning Unlimited).**

Composition: The Board is to consist of:

1. One (1) teacher to be selected by the Program Director
2. Two (2) students selected by the first party from the second party's list. (See process of referral steps 4 & 5)
3. Two (2) students selected by the second party from the first party's list. (See process of referral steps 4 & 5)

Stipulations: The Board's members shall be selected by the above process for each referral. No person shall be a member of this Board in more than fifty percent (50%) of the referrals brought before it, unless both parties involved give their permission. If either the first or second party refuses the selection of the teacher then they and the administration (Director) must submit names of five teachers and from this list select an alternate. All members of the board must either be a member of the program (student or staff). If any Party fails to submit a list or select from a list, such task(s) will be delegated by the Program Director.

Process of Referral

1. The first party must notify the Program Director of his/her intent to bring referral charges upon some member of the Program (student or staff). The **specific charges must be placed in writing.**
2. The Program's administrator at this point notifies the second party that he/she has been brought up for referral by the first party and what allegations have been lodged against him/her. **This notification must be made in writing.**
3. The referral is then submitted for action at the earliest time slot available, this time slot is not to be assigned less than 24 hours from time of notification of the second party, nor any longer than one week from time of notification.
4. Both the first and second party is to submit a list of five (5) eligible, available students, that would give a fair hearing, for selection to the Board.
5. From this list each party is to select two (2) students to serve on the Board. (total 4 persons)
6. The Program director then selects a teacher to serve on the Board.
7. The Program director selects a time that is convenient and selects location for the hearing. (See Process of Referral step 3 for stipulations)
8. The Review Board then meets at this time and place.

9. The Review Board then acts to render a decision in the case and if appropriate, recommends a penalty. A penalty can only be recommended by a 4/5 majority.
10. The Program director is charged to carry out this decision.

Stipulations

1. **Right to Appeal** to an outside neutral party selected by the director, who will act as the appeal examiner. The appeal examiner's decision will be considered final.
2. If the Program administrator is either the first or the second party, then the process of referral will be conducted by a teacher in the program or another administrator at North Central High School.
3. A closed hearing will be held if either the first party, second party, or a majority of the Board requests it.

A Teacher Profile

Is this type of alternative education for all teachers?

Definitely not. A program such as **Learning Unlimited** is for those teachers who are willing to make a basic commitment to work with students in this particular way.

How does one go about selecting staff for an alternative program?

Very carefully. Since the beginning semester the staff applicants have undergone a special screening process including an orientation to the program by meeting staff and students and a series of interviews conducted by staff. The first staff responsible for coordinating and organizing the program was a very diverse group representing a cross-section of educational philosophies and skills. In the initial stages of development it is crucial that the staff be credible to the regular school program and outside community. To design a program that truly responds to the unique needs of each individual, the teacher participant requires sophisticated organizational skills, a broad knowledge of educational innovations and creativity. It would appear that it is impossible to select a staff so equipped initially, but it is very possible to choose a group who possesses these skills collectively.

It should be noted that **Learning Unlimited** staff members have left the program for various reasons — some were not successful, some were successful, but preferred the regular classroom, some left teaching, some were not hired back, and some left for personal reasons. In spite of what sounds like a high turnover rate, the staff has been relatively stable. Of the seven full time staff members, four have at least four years experience in the five year program.

The following lists describe people who make alternative programs work.

Staff Selection
(Traits of Innovators)

Ego: likes himself/herself. Is not affected by what others say because he/she likes himself/herself. Unreserved confidence in one's own ability yet unreserved willingness to admit one's weaknesses. Knows who he/she is and who he/she isn't. Possesses a realistic perception of how he/she fits and the role he/she plays.

Risk Taker: not satisfied with safety and security. Discontented with tried-and-true traditional answers. Likes adventure, excitement, and challenge. Doesn't mind a crisis-a-day operation. Views himself as a learner. Hasn't found all the answers to life's great questions. Is even capable of learning from a student or the custodian.

Imagination: creates mental images of "what could be" or "might be." Can verbalize ideas he has always wanted to try. Is able to expand the extreme opposing poles on any issue. Can visualize "what never has been."

Sense of Humor: able to laugh at himself. Can deal with surface, superficial communication or issues of emotional depth in a manner that makes others feel comfortable. Is fun to be around. Gives off good vibes.

Flexible: adaptable perception to cues and able to maximize the unexpected. Can respond to the needs of others and then lead them. A changing, uncertain state of mind; not set or frozen. Serendipity follows him. Is often heard to say, "Look what I found."

Communication Skills: can listen, hears what others are saying. Doesn't distort. Can interpret non-verbal cues. Speaks in terms, analogies, and illustrations understood by others. Relates all communication to the sphere of experience of the receiver.

Knowledge of Psychology: understands people and what motivates them. Uses Maslow's Heirarchy in a practical way in interpersonal relationships.

Credible Image: is believable and acceptable as a person. Can be tolerated by various groups. Would be welcomed by the faculty lounge hounds but wouldn't spend all his/her time there.

Well Organized Personality: understands his own emotional and interpersonal needs. Uses these needs and their gratification as a part of his/her school role. However, he/she is able to prolong gratification of emotional needs when it is interferring with the task.

Political Schizoid: is able to split himself/herself politically. Can see clearly both sides of the issue. Has empathy for the "enemy" but is dedicated to a cause. Knows when to polarize or compromise.

Values are Situational: responsive to the setting and environment rather than trying to force absolutes. Views life in relative terms. Does not need the security of ideology or panacea. This is not to imply that he/she lacks ethics. He/she simply realizes the reality that the ethical validity of the means is usually determined by the success or failure of the endeavor.

Old teaching tools applied in new ways result in more flexible, responsive management systems.

Kinds of Change Agents
The Necessary Ingredients

Creator: idea person, a reader, imaginative, futurist has his/her head in the clouds, theoritician, dreamer. He/she is aware of other innovations. He/she has little concern for constraints. Keeps asking "What could be?"

Is most comfortable in a book-filled room.

Resource Linker: knows who, where, and when. Can summon support and resources. Understands power and local structure both formal and informal. A salesperson; can get others involved. Knows the community. Can get a foot in the door. If he/she doesn't always know, he/she knows who knows and the sources of answers. Can make contracts and follow through on them.

Likes to B.S. and is good at it.

Implementor: Deals with reality. Always asks, "What is?" Organizer, delegator, coordinator, has finance, administration, and language planning skills. Pragmatist, can convert theory into practical application. Skilled with managing personnel. He deals with the constraints directly, A manager. Is accountable, credible, and tireless at the task.

Is able to walk on eggs or water.

Catalyst: Makes the mixture work. The yeast. Has specialized skills vital to the program. Stimulates others with an often indefinable talent, usually a combination of personality, style, action, humor, and specialized skills. Probably more of a "doer" than a philosopher. You may not always know exactly what he/she is doing but you notice that it doesn't get done when he/she is gone. A self-starter, hyperactive, self-styled, gentle enigma.

He is comfortable to be around and needs attention but gets it in constructive ways.

Image Projector: "If he be for us, who can be against us." Credibility. People will buy him/her and also buy the program as a part of the package. Public relations expert. Fair-haired, unblemished, believable, acceptable, by all factions.

Better watch him,/her, he/she may run for public office.

How is the role of teacher-participant changed? Doesn't the program make extra demands of the teacher?

The role of the teacher is changed drastically. The nature of the program demands that teachers become not only instructors and test-graders, but facilitators, coordinators, counselors and administrators. The student-teacher relationship becomes very personal and may involve social-emotional areas in addition to academic concerns. Program teachers are involved with community contacts and learning activities outside school hours. When making public presentations to educators, the program director has often been confronted with the following comment, "Any educational program would be successful with that kind of commitment from staff . . . " This issue is one that has some implications for the total school program. How can school administrators create a climate that encourages continuing professional growth, commitment, and involvement from staff? The program not only requires staff to give of their own time regularly for student activities, but they must also learn new professional skills not usually required in a traditional teaching role. Program participants have generally concluded that the demands are greater but the rewards are greater also.

Straight from the Teacher's Mouth

What are some personality traits that you have which you feel added to your effectiveness as a teacher in this setting?

(Learning Unlimited staff responds)

Willingness to spend free or extra time with students

Not self inflating (thinking I'm better than students)

Good listener

Willingness to adapt to needs of students

Tolerance

Flexibility—This has been my greatest asset and has enabled me to make an adjustment from the regular program to the alternative program.

Open mindedness—I feel that I use criticism and student suggestions to improve my teaching ability and effectiveness. I am always open to new ideas and techniques.

Experience

Self discipline

Desire to learn

Sincere desire to update techniques

Confidence to try new ideas

Spontaneity and creativity

How has your experience in **Learning Unlimited** *affected your:*

Teaching Style

More open to new ideas and methods, more likely to give students say in what they learn

May be more casual, less authoritative and demanding, use community much more

Shifted responsibility of learning to the students

I am much more low key since I do not have to worry about completing certain objectives within a certain length of time. I am not as frustrated as I was in the regular program, where I knew I was reaching maybe one-fourth of my students.

Combining greater flexibility and openness with structure and guidance

Very little, I always taught in a relaxed and loose manner

Relationships with Students

It has reinforced my belief that students, given the opportunity, will come up with excellent ideas to help develop their minds and bodies

Careful to consider their goals and feelings

I am much more open and relaxed with students than when I was in the regular program, where there was no time to get to know them as people. Many students are my personal friends.

Personal Life

More confident, self-directed

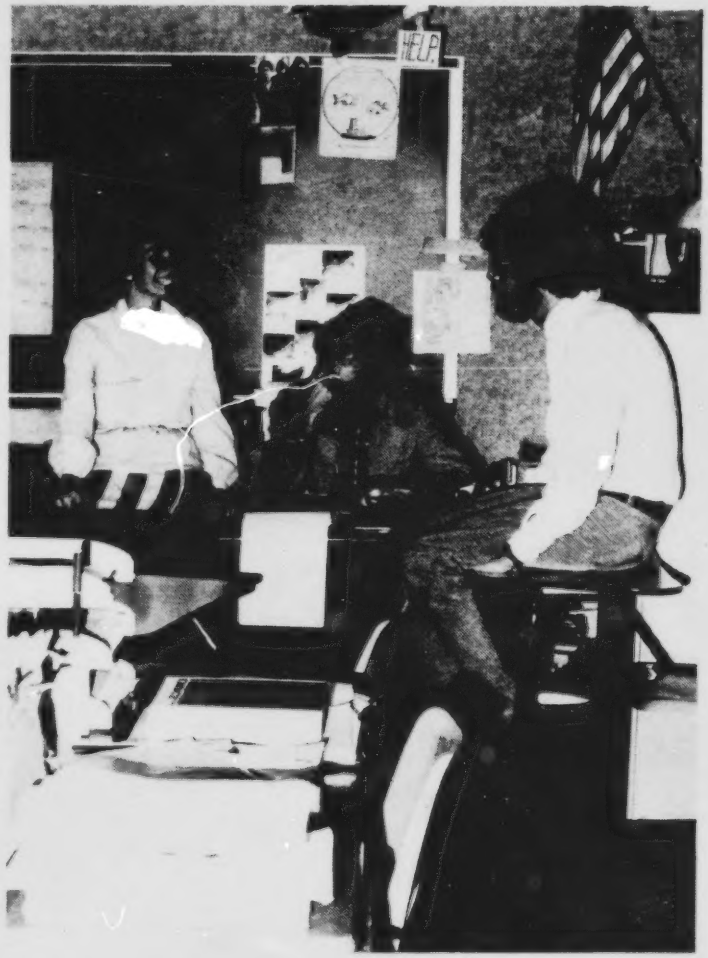
More positive attitude

I have learned to be more patient

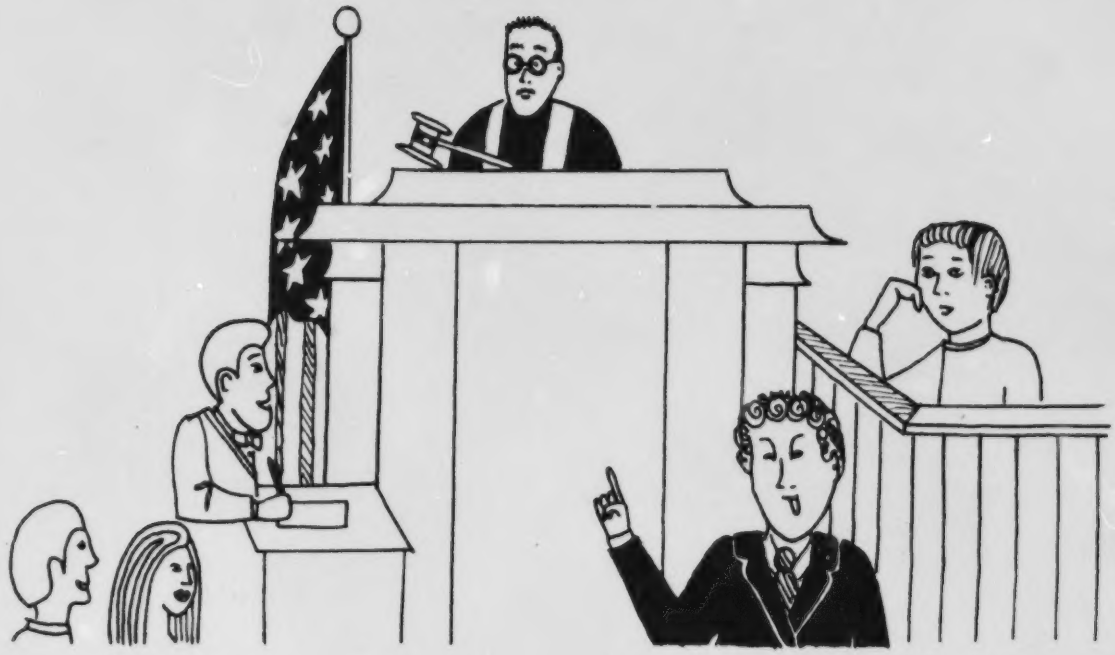
I have discovered this whole new person inside of me who is anxious to learn and do the things I had always wanted to do, but never had the chance to do before. Because of this, I have more confidence in myself as a person and as a teacher.

No change, possibly less boredom

More open, less dogmatic, more tolerant (in all three areas)



In a tightly knit learning community, teachers find it easier to establish mutual support and cooperation.



CHAPTER SIX
EVALUATION

Covering All Bases

In an article in Changing Schools, Gene Mulcahy states, "evaluation is a vital element in the care and nurture of alternative schools. Despite the differences among our schools, it can in general be said that the schools differ from the traditional school in whose shadow they often operate and to whom they will inevitably be compared. When the alternative school folks understand this, then they can take control of the evaluation and comparison and choose an appropriate methodology and time."

"An alternative school," he said, "should take the initiative in evaluation and thereby control the process." He states three of the most common reasons school people decide to evaluate:

*Mulcahy, Gene, "The Shanti Evaluation—Even Wilbur & Orville Couldn't Make It Fly," **Changing Schools**, 42, 1945, Vol. 19, School of Ed., Indiana University.

1. To find out if they are doing what they think they are doing or want to be doing.
2. To prove they are doing what others think is being done or should be done.
3. To find out what someone who knows more than they do thinks.

It is important to realize that these three goals are not always compatible. For example, an evaluation which analyzes your problems effectively may be quite useful, but could seriously threaten your survival. An evaluation which pleases your benefactors may not offer any practical suggestions to improve your operation.

There are some realities to be dealt with if one is to work effectively in an alternative school setting. The status quo is the norm by which all changes or innovations are judged. While most people accept without thinking that the status quo (traditional schooling) is O.K., innovations practiced in alternative schools are acceptable only when they are carefully observed and measured—their effectiveness must be proven conclusively if they are to survive. Given this educational fact of life, teachers in alternative schools must be willing (and secure enough personally and professionally) to expose themselves to continual scrutiny from without and within. Since evaluation is such a crucial aspect of work in alternative schools, it is helpful if the staff approaches it in a positive manner. The idea of evaluation loses its threatening image if it is viewed as a process that prods and probes—one which encourages program growth in relationship to the ever-changing needs of the people involved.

Evaluation of **Learning Unlimited** was approached in much the same way as the staff approached the students. As many approaches as possible were used in evaluating the program. Using everything from highly subjective personal opinion polls to sophisticated standardized instruments, the many components of **Learning Unlimited** were constantly monitored. The following breakdown of criterion help in planning a comprehensive program of evaluation:

INDICATORS OF CHANGE

FORMAL MEASURES

Standardized achievement and ability tests, the scores on which allow inferences to be made regarding the extent to which cognitive objectives concerned with knowledge, comprehension, understanding, skills, and applications have been attained. Comparisons can be made between scores of those in the program and those not in the program. Year to year comparisons can be made of those in the program.

Standardized self inventories designed to yield measures of adjustment, appreciations, attitudes, interests, and temperment from which inferences can be formulated concerning the possession of psychological traits (such as defensiveness, rigidity, aggressiveness, cooperativeness, hostility, and anxiety).

Standardized rating scales and check lists for judging the quality of products in visual arts, crafts, shop activities, penmanship, creative writing, exhibits for competitive events, cooking, typing, letter writing, fashion design, and other activities.

Standardized tests of psychomotor skills and physical fitness.

SEMI OR INFORMAL MEASURES

Incomplete sentence techniques: categorization of types of responses, enumeration of their frequencies, or rating of their psychological appropriateness relative to specific criteria.

Interviews: frequencies and measurable levels of responses to formal and informal questions raised in a face-to-face interrogation.

Peer nominations: frequencies of election or assignment to leadership roles, or the sociogram technique may be particularly suitable.

Questionnaires: frequencies of responses to items in an objective format and numbers of responses and content analysis of open-ended questions.

Self-concept perceptions: measures of current status and indices of congruence between real self and ideal self—often determined from use of the semantic differential or Q-sort techniques.

Self-evaluation measures: student's own reports on his perceived or desired level of achievement, on his perceptions of his personal and social adjustment, and on his future academic and vocational plans.

Teacher made achievement tests (objective and essay): the scores on which allow inferences regarding the extent to which specific instructional objectives have been attained.

Teacher-made rating scales and check lists for observation of classroom behaviors: performance levels of speech, music, and art: manifestion of creative endeavors, personal and social adjustment, physical well-being.

OTHER ACCEPTABLE MEASURES

Anecdotal records: critical incidents noted including frequencies of behaviors judged to be highly undesirable or highly deserving of commendation.

Attendance: frequency and duration when attendance is required or considered optional (as in club meeting, special events, or off-campus activities).

Autobiographical data: behaviors reported that could be classified and subsequently assigned judgmental values concerning their appropriateness relative to specific objectives concerned with human development.

Awards, citations, honors, and related indicators of distinctive or creative performance: frequency of occurance or judgments of merit in terms of scaled values. Citations: both formal and informal means of recommendation such as in the newspaper, television, school assembly, classroom, bulletin board, or elsewhere. Elected positions: numbers and types held in class, student body, or out-of-school social groups.

Disciplinary actions taken: frequency and type.

Dropouts: numbers of students leaving school before completion of program of studies.

Extracurricular activities: frequency and duration of participation in observable behaviors amenable to classification such as taking part in athletic

events, charity drives, cultural activities, and numerous service-related avocational endeavors.

Grade point average: including numbers of recommended units of course work in academic as well as in non-college preparatory program.

Withdrawals: numbers of students withdrawing from school or from a special program.

The following research summaries outline the results of major program evaluations from 1974-1979. The full texts of these evaluation studies are available by mail order.*

EVALUATION REPORT TO LILLY ENDOWMENT 1976

In an extensive evaluation undertaken by Dr. Gary Phillips during the 1975-76 school year, the following research questions were addressed:

1) Has the program met its written goals as orginally proposed to the MSDWT School Board and Lilly Endowment?

2) What is the impact of **Learning Unlimited** on the parent school, North Central High School, and on the township?

3) What is the reaction of the school-community?

4) What is the reaction and response of the student-parent participants to the program?

5) What curricular models developed by the alternative program have spin-off benefits or have been adopted by the larger school?

6) What is the impact of the alternative program to other school systems and contributions to educational program development in general?

7) How have student participants fared academically as compared to non-alternative students?

8) How have student participants developed in the affective areas which are predominant in the stated goals?

9) What is the effect of **Learning Unlimited** on teaching participants?

The approach to this evaluation was unique. Allowing the weakness of any single instrument, strategy, or procedure, evaluation data was collected using multiple strategies for each question. The multiple cross check procedure allowed evaluators to use a variety of proven as well as unique, highly innovative strategies and balance the results from all approaches before drawing program conclusions.

Students were administered several standardized instruments. Dr. James McElhinney of Ball State University served as an external evaluator by designing data gathering instruments unique to **Learning Unlimited's** structure and by extensively interviewing of program participants, Drs. Robert Wolf and Greg Rhoades of Indiana University conducted the Judicial Inquiry. A follow-up of program graduates was conducted. Gordon Goodwin served as statistician and computer technician, assimilating and synthesizing internally collected data.

A careful review of all data collected and a cross check of multiple sources led the director to draw the following broad conclusions regarding the program evaluation:

1) Academically most student participants (90%) have improved the quantity of their academic endeavors and the quality of their learning while in the Program compared to their own previous academic performance. This statement is based on standardized prepost tests, grade-rank in class comparisons, student-parent-teacher reports, etc. This statement does side-step the issue of whether students in **Learning Unlimited** learn as much, more, or less than other students in the regular program. We have generally avoided a control group approach. It does, however, state emphatically that students, while in the program, learn more than **they** did previously as standard curriculum students.

2) It appears conclusively that the program is in many ways a simulation of the college experience and, therefore, does prepare students for college better than non-alternative programs at least in the areas of time management, self direction, study skill, identifying and using learning resources external to the classroom, academic self assessment, self-motivation and social coping.

There remains some question as to whether the above statement could be expanded to include the academic content and basic skills areas; however, the brief period of time and small student sampling make this question diffcult to research at this time

It can reasonably be concluded that a combination of both alternative and non-alternative experiences is a better preparation for college than either experience alone.

3) Students do increase their involvement in learning activities and enthusiasm for pursuit of academic and affective skill improvement. A common quote of students and parents regarding the program seems to apply: "Students do more work, but they enjoy it more than they might in more traditional programs."

4) The wide use of community-based learning experiences and independent structure results in:

a. students improving their feelings about their own ability to cope in the adult world.

b. ability to connect practical experiences with formalized text and classroom endeavors.

c. improved student independent motivation and internalized responsibility for academic and social existence.

d. improved students' feelings about themselves and a trust in their ability to make decisions, deal with consequences, and solve problems.

5) Participation in **Learning Unlimited** demands extraordinary professional skill acquisition and time commitment from staff. Teachers generally agree that participation is a rewarding growth experience, but are also in agreement that it is often very frustrating and time consuming. Staff "burn-out" seems to be greater for first year participants than for those in expanded time participation. Teachers appear to obtain skills necessary and systemize and maximize their efforts, resulting in improved product with less effort.

6) **Learning Unlimited** has had measurable impact on NCHS resulting in curricular change and expanded program development. Several components of the alternative program have been adopted in part while others are in the process of being adopted. The Program does initially cause some dissonance and polarization among non-alternative staff. This second year has been characterized by improved relations between the two staffs and initiation of mutually beneficial endeavors and joint projects. A formalized professional growth program has been implemented using participants of both programs.

7) **Learning Unlimited** is rapidly emerging as a model, both state-wide and nationally as evidenced by:

a. articles regarding the program in current educational periodicals (eight and more to come)

b. presentations by staff and students at educational conferences and professional workshops.

c. number of on-site visits by other educators initiating similar projects—this exposure has contributed to a growing township image of North Central as a leader in educational program development.

8) Each of the original program goals have been met or could be judged as in process and moving in a positive direction toward fulfillment.

9) Parents and student participants could be judged to be very receptive to the program based on the large number of applicants, the small number of voluntary withdrawals, and the reported data from both groups. The reaction of the non-participant community is one of lack of information, confusion, suspicion and/or distortion of limited information. This is an area that needs improvement.

LIFE ROLE COMPETENCIES AND HOW STUDENTS BECOME COMPETENT ADULTS 1977

One of several methods used by **Learning Unlimited** to evaluate the program was the comparison of a standardized test scores with other normative groups such as national samples or non-alternative students at North Central High School. A valid criticism of such comparisons is that alternative program students are different upon entry to the program and therefore cannot be matched or compared to non-alternative program students with pre-post tests. This evaluation, conducted by Director, Gary Phillips, during the 1977-78 school year, sought to compare two groups of **Learning Unlimited** students. Included in the report were all students who had taken both the PSAT and SAT tests. Students were divided into two groups for the purpose of comparison:

CORE: those students taking both English and math in **Learning Unlimited.**
NON—CORE: those students enrolled in **Learning Unlimited** classes but not enrolled in both English and math in the program.

The alternative program students were then compared to national and school norms.

Statistics, analyzed by Gordon Goodwin of Indiana University, yielded, in summary: There was no significant difference in the mean scores of the groups on either the PSAT or SAT, thus supporting the claim that academic achievement will not suffer as a result of experiential education.

TRANSITION FROM ADOLESCENCE TO ADULTHOOD: A FOLLOW-UP STUDY OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES AND JUDGMENTS OF LIFE ROLE COMPETENCIES 1978

Given the assumption that one function of the high school is to enable students to make the transition from adolescence to adulthood, Program Director Gary Phillips and North Central High School assistant principal, Jim Ellsberry set out to discover whether **Learning Unlimited** helped students become more effective adults. The following eighteen life role competencies were selected for testing by a study group of teachers and administrators of Washington Township:

*skill in reading
*skill in written communication
*skill in mathematical computation
*skill in self-directed or independent learning
*skill in selection of a career
*skill in making wise consumer decisions
*skill in time management
*skill in interacting with authority
*skill in maintaining physical health and safety
*skill as a citizen participant
*skill in acquiring information
*skill in oral communication
*skill in social relationships
*skill in handling frustration and depression
*skill of self-assessment
*skill in appreciation of beauty
*skill in efficacy and problem solving
*skill in finding meaning in life

The following goals were set forth for the study:

I. Determine the judgments of high school graduates regarding:
   A. degree to which eighteen skills (competencies) are essential to the successful assumption of adult life roles.
   B. degree of competence each graduate has attained in each skill area.
   C. experiences in high school that contributed to attainment of competence in the eighteen skill areas.
   D. experiences in high school that would have contributed to skill development had they been available.

II. Comparison of judgments of graduates who were participants in **Learning Unlimited** with non-participants.

III. Comparison of judgments of graduates now in college with those graduates who assumed life roles other than the pursuit of post-secondary schooling.

IV. Skills (competencies) in addition to the eighteen selected for study that are judged by graduates to be essential to the transition from adolescence to adulthood.

V. The judgments of participants of **Learning Unlimited** regarding program experiences that contributed to the successful transition from adolescence to adulthood.

The participants of this study were all graduates of North Central High School during the four years prior to the study (1974-8). The participants were randomly selected: 100 from **Learning Unlimited** and 100 from the general population of graduates (excluding those who had participated in the alternative program.)

Statistics, analyzed by Gordon Goodwin of Indiana University, yielded, in summary: **Learning Unlimited** students consistently rated themselves higher on the attainment of the 18 life role competencies than their counterparts in the traditional program.

DOCTORAL STUDY ON WALKABOUT 1978

In his doctoral study in 1978 at Indiana University, Devon Metzger compared the alternative Program with the traditional program with respect to 1) governing procedures, 2) the "political" climate within which policy decisions are formulated and 3) the degree to which different governing procedures affect student attitudes towards school. The research instrument included two sets of questionnaires. The first was designed to ascertain the degree to which students, administrators, teachers, and parents participated in each of the following activities: decision-making, communication, leadership, and influence over the content and direction of program activities. The second questionnaire was used to measure selected student attitudes, namely trust, social integration, political interest and confidence in the political structure of the two programs.

Results of Metzger's study showed that:

* With respect to active participation in the governing procedures of the school, students in **Learning Unlimited** consistently rated themselves higher than students in the traditional school.
* Social and political attitudes differ between the two programs as well—in **Learning Unlimited,** positive attitudes toward school bore a higher correlation to positive society-related attitudes than those in the traditional program.
* Positive social and political attitudes emerged more quickly during a year's time for students in the alternative program.
* Students in the program for longer than one year demonstrated an increase in positive attitudes toward both school and community.

EVALUATION OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PROJECT—UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA 1977-79

Learning Unlimited is one of twenty schools involved in the national research study co-sponsored by the National Association of Secondary School Principals, National Association of Independent Schools, and the National Catholic Education Association with funds from the Rockefeller Family Fund and the Spencer and General Mills Foundations. At the heart of this study is its "Panel of Practitioners", teachers and administrators from twenty diverse school systems from Beverly Hills, California, to Newark, New Jersey. With the assistance of seasoned education evaluators like Ralph Tyler, they are responsible for defining the issues to be studied, for helping select and develop instruments for implementing the design, for helping interpret the data collected—and for keeping the whole study practical, understandable and applicable to everyday life in schools.

The first phase of the evaluation was published in the NASSP Bulletin in November, 1978. The following table summarizes the preliminary results. More extensive information will be available from The Center for Youth Development and Research (University of Minnesota) in the Spring of 1979.

What Students Learn In Experiential Learning

Composite Profile of 20 Experiential Programs (N = 4.000)

ITEM (in rank order)	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSES		
	Agree*	Disagree*	Don't know
Concern for fellow human beings	93%	4%	3%
Ability to get things done and to work smoothly with others	94	4	3
Realistic attitudes towards other people such as the elderly, handicapped people or government officials	88	4	8
Self motivation to learn, participate, achieve	88	7	5
Self concept (sense of competence, self-awareness)	88	7	5
Responsibility to group or class	86	3	11
Risk taking—openness to new experiences	86	7	8
Problem solving	86	9	5
Accept consequences of own actions	85	9	5
Gathering and analyzing information, observation, reflecting, on experience	84	8	7
Knowledge of community organization and resources	82	7	11
Responsibility for my own life	80	10	9
Awareness of community problems and assumption of new important tasks in community and school	78	13	9
Communication skills (listening, speaking, presenting ideas through a variety of media)	77	11	7
Realistic ideas about world of work and awareness of a variety of careers	71	18	11

*Strongly agree and agree are combined and disagree and strongly disagree are combined.

A COMPARISON OF INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES IN THE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL WITH ITS TRADITIONAL COUNTERPART, WILLIAM PARRETT, I.U.—1979

In his doctoral study at Indiana University, William Parrett attempted to determine if teachers in selected alternative and conventional schools have different perceptual levels regarding the emphasis they place on specific instructional functions. A second goal was to determine if students in secondary alternative and conventional schools perceived that the levels of emphasis being placed on instructional functions were similar to that of their own classroom teachers.

After collecting and analyzing data from schools in five systems representing five states, the researcher concluded:

- Significant differences exist between the instructional practices of teachers in conventional and alternative schools.
- Teachers in alternative schools tend to be more consistent in their practices than do conventional school teachers.
- Teachers in alternative and conventional schools demonstrate more similarity than was previously thought.
- Teachers in both alternative and conventional settings have difficulty in practicing the instructional function which focuses on involving the students in instructional planning and evaluation.

In addition to extensive formal evaluation, **Learning Unlimited** has experimented annually with a highly innovative method of evaluation, the Judicial Inquiry. The following article, "Program Evaluation by Judicial Inquiry," by Jim Ellsberry and Gary Phillips is reprinted with permission of Phi Delta Kappa's WALKABOUT Project. An 18 minute color video cassette or reel to reel tape that illustrate the procedure for organizing and conducting a judicial inquiry are available by mail order.* (Also available are sample copies of the jury's recommendations on past program evaluations)

PROGRAM EVALUATION BY JUDICIAL INQUIRY

A *judicial* inquiry? Put **your** school on public trial?

Let's face it; schools are already being judged. Some of those judgments are biased by rumor, gossip, and hearsay. Educators have a responsibility to get accurate, descriptive information to the public. And the taxpayer has a right to be informed.

Two things are worth remembering at the outset: 1) It is easier to convey extensive and accurate information about one's school than it is to rectify misinformation; 2) Communication between the school and the general public is a two-way endeavor—that is, school officials ought to listen as well as inform.

It is very important for educators to listen. Students, parents, teachers, members of the school board, and other members of the general community all have a vested interest in the schools that serve them. Many of these people have well-informed ideas about the relationship between school and life in the community. Their opinions and judgments are often based on information that would enable professional educators to make improvements in schooling that they might never think about without citizen input.

Judicial inquiry has served our program well as a means of self-evaluation and as an effective procedure for presenting detailed information. Parents and others from the community come to share as well as learn from the experience. Administratively, judicial inquiry benefits our program in the sense that it impresses as well as informs. Because the format is appealing, judicial inquiry functions as an excellent public relations activity for us. But as you might have guessed, a greater value of judicial inquiry has its focus elsewhere.

The primary value in conducting the judicial inquiry, which closely resembles a legal trial, is derived from its educational impact on our students. It is they who gather data, analyze issues, plan formal arguments, organize procedural strategies, cooperate as teams to prepare their cases for trial, and plan for community involvement. For some of our students, judicial inquiry represents the single most challenging self-directed learning experience of the year. They know that their performances will be scrutinized by peers, teachers, parents and various professional guests from the community—including newspaper reporters.

Is it risky to put one's school on public trial? Yes, very risky. But education itself is a risky business right now. To avoid open, candid self-evaluation and to neglect the school's need for good public relations will merely invite risks of greater consequence.

This "how to" outline is based on the experiences of staff and students at **Learning Unlimited** who have publicly evaluated their school within a school using the judicial inquiry method. With the assistance of the originator of the concept—Dr. Robert Wolf of Indiana University—our staff and students conducted their first judicial inquiry four years ago. Since that time it has become an annual event.

Essential Steps for Conducting Your Own Judicial Inquiry

1. identify a crucial issue facing your school
2. select participants and assign specific roles
3. select the proper site
4. select and orient judge and jury

5. train individual participants
6. prepare the pro and con cases
7. rehearse the trial proceedings
8. promote the event in both school and community
9. conduct the trial
10. evaluate jury findings

Step One: Identify the issues. This can be accomplished by a simple questionnaire survey or telephone interview to determine primary concerns of students, teachers, and parents. Or, the administrator may select the issue for presentation. During past judicial inquiries, we have put "on trial" such issues as:

Is the school providing adequate basic skill preparation for college?
Is the educational value of community-based learning worth the cost and time involved?
Should **Learning Unlimited**—as an alternative program—be housed in facilities apart from North Central High School?

Not only must the issues be identified, both pro and con positions must be clearly stated. For example, the pro side would state and build a case to prove that the graduates of our high school are academically sound in their preparation for college. The con side would try to prove that the graduates of the school are not adequately prepared for academic competition in college.

Step Two: Select the participants and assign specific roles. This can be carried out a number of ways. For example, judicial inquiry can become a class project through a course such as business law, speech, or government. It can be conducted as a student council project to improve the school. Participation does require a considerable investment of student time. Students need not be experienced in debate or legal procedures. They can be taught these skills in preparation for the inquiry. It is probably advisable to grant students school credit for the inquiry as partially fulfilling the objectives of a course. Otherwise, there is little incentive for the student to make the needed commitment to the endeavor. Team captains should be selected and an effort made to divide the responsibilities by delegating or voluntarily dividing the chores in preparation for the inquiry.

Step Three: Select and prepare the site. The physical setting for judicial inquiry is very important. It should be arranged in the same manner as if you were preparing for a dramatic production. An auditorium is fine provided all participants and spectators can see and hear. It might be worth your time to visit a courtroom and try to simulate the arrangement there. You will want the judge in an elevated, central position. Both the jury and the advocacy teams must be seated so that they can be clearly seen and heard. A number of microphones might be required.

Step Four: Select the judge and jury. The judge and jurors play key roles in judicial inquiry; they should be carefully chosen. The judge should be someone with experience in advocacy proceedings—a local judge or lawyer, or perhaps your school's debate coach. The judge will define the rules of the trial and will enforce them. He or she will rule on the admissibility of evidence, the order of events and proceedings, and the sequence of both direct and redirect testimony. The judge will also maintain order with the audience. Rules and proceedings may vary to fit your purposes, but they should be determined by the judge in collaboration with the pro and con teams.

We have selected jury members in two different ways. First, we sometimes select jurors who are not familiar with the school and who will come to the proceedings with a greater degree of

neutrality and objectivity. They have represented a wide range of professional experience. We have had college professors, parents, teachers, counselors, and student government representatives from other schools. On one occasion, an adolescent psychologist served.

Second, we have sometimes invited persons whom we know to have a personal interest in our program—persons who have a great deal of firsthand information about us. These have included some of our own central office administrators, members of our board, and parents of our students. Both advocates and adversaries of our program have made excellent jurors; they start from an information base, and they are personally concerned about improving **Learning Unlimited.** However, for these very reasons, we could not expect them to be neutral and unbiased.

The jury needs no instruction prior to "trial," provided one member is appointed jury foreman and is given the responsibility for managing the jury's deliberations and presenting the final recommendations. An evaluation of the inquiry itself, along with recommendations for improving our program, constitutes the jury's "verdict."

Step Five: Train the student participants. This is time consuming but essential. Students may visit a courtroom or secure assistance from a local volunteer lawyer or debate coach. Students will need assistance with:

1. gathering data to prove their position
2. developing strategies and tactics to use during the trial
3. organizing and sequencing presentations
4. learning the communication techniques of interrogation, debate, and the use of emotional, humorous, and intellectual appeals to convince the jury
5. understanding the rules—e.g., when to legitimately object to evidence or testimony being presented

Certain students should be selected on each team to become expert on one or more segments of the tasks listed above. For example, one student might be selected to *write* the opening and closing statements while another member is selected to *present* the statements at the inquiry.

Step Six: Build the case. Each team is free to pursue any method necessary to prove the validity of its position and destroy the validity of the other position. The only caution needed here is the responsibility of the faculty sponsor to approve all material and witnesses before the trial. The purpose of this restraint is to avoid embarrassing innocent persons or entering unsubstantiated claims into the hearing proceedings.

This process is valuable for students because it forces them to seek out relevant data by interviewing prospective witnesses, reviewing existing program evaluations, and initiating their own research to substantiate their position. Our students have used three primary sources of information as evidence:

1. testimony of expert witness—e.g., parents, students, teachers, administrators, and others who have firsthand knowledge about our program
2. research—e.g., questionnaires and opinion polls, test scores, attendance records, program statistics, etc.
3. media exhibits—e.g., slide presentations, charts, tape recordings, etc. (last year during judicial inquiry, one of our teams used a telelecture, enabling them to question a graduate of our program who was at a university 200 miles away. The jury was impressed.)

Both teams develop a battle plan that includes division of the major issue into sub-issues. They outline the sequence of events, and allot appropriate slots of time for each part of the presentation. Staying within the time limits can be a problem, although concise preparation and rehearsals will conserve time.

Step Seven: Rehearse the proceedings. This will give an opportunity to refine the skills of the presenters and guarantee that both the pro and con teams are pursuing the same issue.

There are to be no surprises!! Both sides must share with each other a list of witnesses, sequence of events, and sub-issues leading to the closing statements. In the excitement and competition of the final few days prior to the trial, the battle plans and sequence of events are changing almost daily for both teams. As witnesses refuse to testify, new witnesses are secured, or valuable new data uncovered, both teams revise their strategies.

Occasionally, witnesses are reluctant to be negative toward the school or program on trial. The faculty sponsor must assure all witnesses that their contribution will be viewed as helpful to the school, rather than destructive, because the negative testimony makes possible new creative solutions to the problems.

Step Eight: Promote the event. Promotion of judicial inquiry can be a public relations paradise. Students should send special invitations to as many interested members of the community as they can accommodate. The list should certainly include parents, relatives, ministers, civic leaders, and political office holders. Do not forget to invite members of your central office administration and members of the school board!

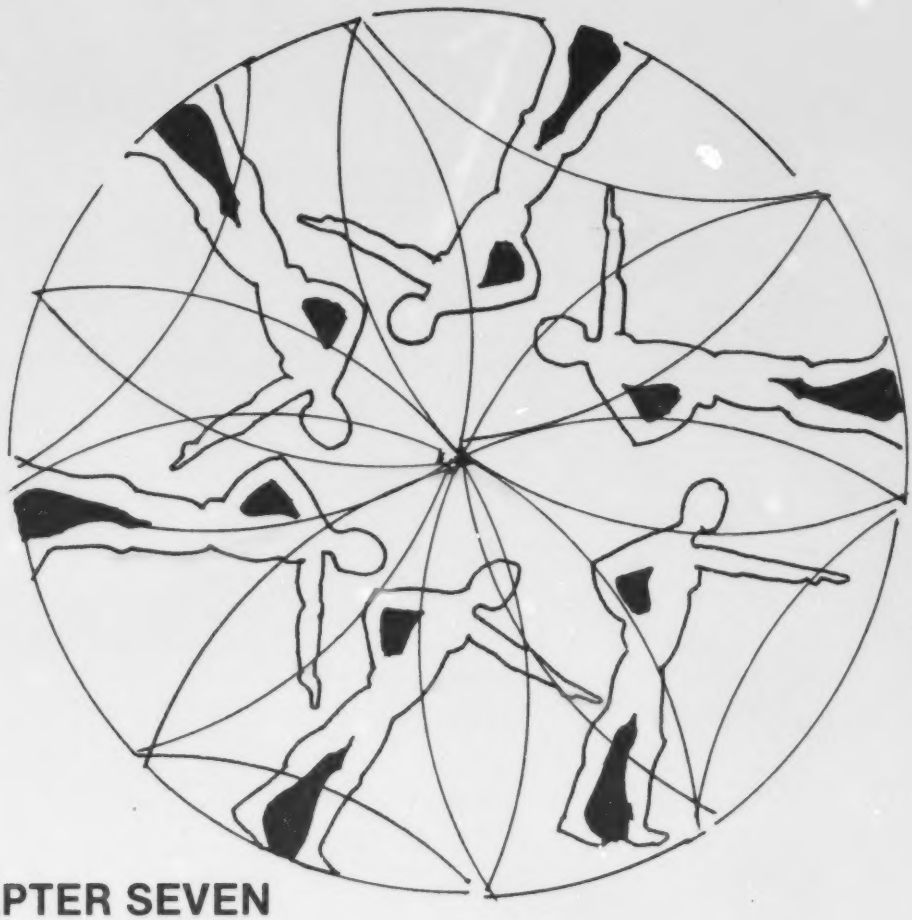
Usually the news media will be especially interested in covering the trial due to the novelty of the procedure and their interest in local schools. This is an opportunity to get your school or program publicly recognized as willing to be accountable. The general reaction from the public has been that we must have nothing to hide or we wouldn't risk public inspection. Also, there have been expressions of admiration for the courage of school officials to risk the inquiry process.

A brochure announcing the event and explaining the process is helpful in recruiting an audience, and it also helps spectators to understand the objectives of the trial before they arrive.

Step Nine: Conduct the trial. Once the trial is in session, it is in the hands of the judge, jury, and the student advocate teams. With careful planning and thorough attention to the details inferred in steps 1-8 above, you should have a memorable success. Relax and enjoy it!

Step Ten: Evaluate the jury recommendations. After the trial, the decisions of the jury are first distributed to the pro and con teams. The results and jury recommendations are also distributed to decision makers, including the school board, central office administration, and parent advisory groups. Any or all of these may wish to assist in an action program to implement the recommendations and thus resolve the issue.

The school is never bound by the decisions of the jury nor must the administrator adhere to the recommendations. From our past experience, however, the jury has contributed, in every case, valuable new insights and recommendations for improving **Learning Unlimited.***



CHAPTER SEVEN
IMPACT

Spin-offs To the System

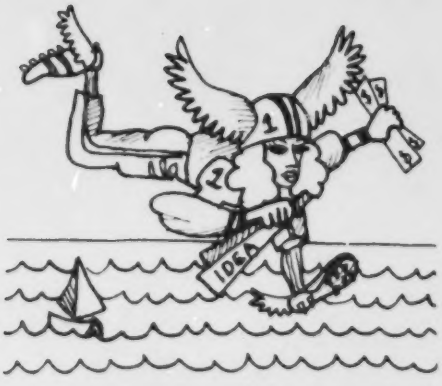
One of the primary functions of the North Central alternative program as outlined in the grant was to function as an in-service project which would provide program spin-offs to the total school. This was to be accomplished by modeling educational innovations on a small scale so that the innovative attempts could be "fish bowled" with both successes and failures very visible to all. One advantage of this model approach was the fact that mistakes or unsuccessful innovations attempted on a small scale with a volunteer group have little effect on the total system. Successful practices, however, are visible and exert at least subtle pressure on the total system often prodding program movement and easing innovations into broad acceptance through exposure and osmosis.

The alternative staff and steering committee recognized the fact that North Central High School had one of the best comprehensive programs in the nation and that many superior programs were already in operation. Change and innovation were advocated on a selective basis only (i.e. not change for the sake of change) by expanding awareness of available options.

It was felt that the model would be effective as an in-service project even without an organized plan because the presence of successful innovative practices is contagious, especially beyond the

initial resistance stage. Ideas are implanted with interaction of staff, students, and parents. Also, staff members take the model ideas and practices and add their own interpretation, adaptation, and creativity to orchestrate their own innovations which may be similar or very different from the original idea.

In a hand-out written in 1975 regarding the in-service component of the alternative program, Gary Phillips, Director, concluded that spin-off adaptations would seldom be credited directly to the model program. He listed the following perplexing but understandable reasons:



(1) Sometimes innovators are not sure of the source of their idea or stimulus. If you ask a creative person where he got the idea for a certain practice, he may indeed be unable to credit a certain book, presentation, graduate course, in-service workshop, pre-school experience, or observation of a fellow professional. The idea communication may have been so subtle as to confuse the source or it may have been the result of repeated re-inforcement from several sources.

(2) Many other change agents and catalysts are in operation in any system often pushing in the same directions as the model program.

(3) People who make changes tend to take on ownership of the idea. My idea becomes my program and the essence of the professional "me."

(4) The original idea or practice may in fact be altered drastically through adaptation and application to another learning environment.

(5) There is often resistance to crediting a model program for anything, especially among those who were initially skeptical or hostile. No one likes to admit he was wrong or hear the implied "I told you so."

However, simulation is still the sincerest form of flattery. Few people are acclaimed in their own time or town.

I am predicting that the alternative program will never be credited directly for spin-off effects or program change by large numbers of professional staff but it will nevertheless be successful in promoting professional growth and program change.

This prediction seems to hold true. It is difficult to assess the degree of impact that the alternative program has had on the total school. However, the intent of this section is to list and briefly explain several innovations that can be (directly or indirectly) attributed to the model program.

IN SERVICE/STAFF DEVELOPMENT

A series of in-service workshops have been offered to the North Central High School staff in order to provide on-the-job training for classroom teachers. The major objectives of this program were (and still are):

*To provide an opportunity for teachers to develop an awareness of innovative programs, models for classroom management, and specific skills that could be developed by those who are thus motivated to pursue these ideas in greater depth.

*To provide an opportunity for teachers who are developing innovative programs, classroom management techniques, and special skills to share their knowledge and experience with colleagues.

*To provide, at the local level, a resource for teachers that attends to specific professional growth needs within the high school.

The organization of in-service meetings has varied from year to year with attendance requirements ranging from mandatory (for all staff or for those teachers cited as having needs for improvement) to voluntary with an option to receive graduate credit. Sessions offered on a weekly or bi-monthly schedule have been presented by administrators, alternative staff and directors, regular classroom teachers, department chairpersons, and college professors. Subject matter has varied, based on administrative concerns and teachers' major areas of interest. The sessions were taped for viewing at alternative times and for use by other teachers in the township. The following is a sampling of topics:

Goal-Writing Practice

Question Asking Techniques (based on taxonomies of Bloom and Krathwohl)*

Use of Groups as a Classroom Motivator

Kids Can Cope with Content

Individualizing Instruction*

Beyond the Classroom—Community Based Learning

Learning Styles

Diagnostic-Prescriptive Methods

Varying Instructional Patterns

Grading and Evaluation

Required Minimum Essentials: Yes or No?

Classroom Options*

During the 1977-78 school years the in-service project evolved into a program organized in conjunction with Ball State University called Staff Development. In-service at the building level shifted from emphasis on developing skills in classroom observation, diagnostic-prescriptive techniques to inserving non-tenured teachers on substantial issues (i.e. which included sessions on grading, evaluation of student achievement, and developing alternatives to grading.)

The activities of the first year were evaluated by a team of professionals from Ball State University. (The second year is now being evaluated.) The following excerpt is taken from the Evaluation Report. Teachers' judgments of SDP activities ranged form "waste of time" to "very worthwhile."

Targets are weakness, rather than strength oriented. Specifically, teachers are asked to describe and solve a major problem in their classrooms using "Dr. Phillip's method." Behavior management such as reduction of tardies and motivation appeared to be one of the most popular targets.

Three fourths of the teachers interviewed indicated evidence of positive impact.

Teacher priorities for program impact this year include: working with slow learners and continued work on problems using SDP as resource.

Most teachers consistently perceived they were helped most by the concrete suggestions and instructional materials shared.

In terms of how the SDP staff could be of more help, teachers listed:

—clearer delineation of their expectations concerning teachers

—help in creating more unity in the support group

—conducting needs assessment of teachers rather than administrators

—providing more technical assistance

Overall satisfaction ranged from low to high. Apparently, many teachers were disgruntled during the first semester due to the lack of teacher input in planning. The creation of a planning committee for Spring, 1978 semester may account for heightened teacher satisfaction later in the year.

HOW HAS YOUR ROLE IN INSTRUCTION CHANGED IN THE PAST FIVE YEARS?

A Survey of Tenure Teachers, 1978

Each department chairperson in North Central High School administered an instrument to the teachers in their departments who had been employed in our building five or more years. The purpose was to describe how the demands, role, and expectations of the teacher had changed and secondly, what kinds of new techniques and skills had teachers added to adapt to these changes in students, society, etc.

The following report gives the responses of fifty tenure teachers. No effort was made in this report to analyze the responses or draw conclusions based on the data, although a number of the instructional techniques on the instrument were included as representing innovations introduced to the building by **Learning Unlimited** in the past four years.

Based on conversations with classroom teachers, the assumption is made that the teacher's role in instruction is changing.

Assumptions: that demands on teacher time are increasing rather than decreasing
that student population changes, mainstreaming of L-D and special education and other occurances have resulted in the expansion of variety of essential teacher skills and classroom strategies.
that the teacher's role in instruction is becoming more diverse and complex and less simple and focused.

To test these and other assumptions regarding the role of classroom teachers at NCHS, you are asked to fill out the following questionnaire regarding your own role.

COMPARED TO FIVE YEARS AGO	use now more often	use about same now	use less now	not appropriate for my area	?
1. use large group instruction of lecture	0	29	20	1	
2. individualize instruction for special students (remedial)	23	19	0	8	
3. individualize instruction for gifted and talented	16	26	3	4	
4. use small group projects as an instruction technique	18	20	8	1	
5. use simulations, role play, or drama as instructional technique	10	15	4	16	2
6. use peer tutoring within the classroom	21	18	5	4	
7. use one-to-one tutoring within the classroom	21	23	2	4	
8. utilize Glasser's classroom meeting as a process	5	13	6	14	9
9. grant credit for out-of-school or community activities	10	19	3	17	
10. use of media (films, over-head, slide, etc.)	23	17	7	1	
11. utilize course objectives, competencies, or minimum essentials	23	23	0	2	
12. use community speakers, resource persons	8	20	9	11	2
13. join with other staff members in mutual project	8	22	10	5	3
14. use student contracting as an instructional technique	10	17	7	13	1
15. function as a counselor-advisor to students for personal-social problems	11	30	4	4	
16. utilize field trip or community based activities	5	17	12	14	
17. include behavioral or affective goals in my instruction and student evaluation	12	25	2	2	
18. have parent conferences	12	31	2	2	
19. work with counselors on improving student performance	12	31	2	2	
20. attend staffing conferences on problem students	16	19	4	6	
21. consciously try to improve student basic skills not directly related to my course i.e. vocabulary, punctuation, spelling, math, composition	13	28	3	3	
22. require students to use NCHS library as a classroom activity	12	24	9	3	
23. require students to experience some independent study as a technique	20	21	1	5	
24. provide optional classroom activities from which a student may choose	21	19	2	4	
25. use student skill diagnosis and prescription in instruction	12	27	1	3	2
26. evaluate my own effectiveness as a teacher	27	16	1	1	
27. spend classroom instruction time in disciplining students	9	19	18	2	
28. permit students to lead discussion or take responsibility for presentations	15	24	5	3	

DEVELOPMENT OF COMPETENCIES

After initial development of course competencies to insure academic standards by alternative staff members, regular program staff members began to examine curriculum. In at least two summer workshops in 1976 (English and Social Studies Departments participated) regular and alternative staff members worked together on course competencies. Since then a number of departments have refined course objectives into skill oriented competencies. For example, both the Physical Education Department and Art Department of North Central High School are now competency-based. The physical education curriculum is outstanding and has its emphasis on community sports and activities, rather than "team" sports that are not generally practiced after one leaves school. For more information about how to obtain copies of curriculum guides on competencies see the appendix.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Over the five year funding period, monies from the Lilly Grant were used to finance several programs in the school district which were related to alternative education in some way but operated autonomously from **Learning Unlimited.**

INSTRUCTIONAL PROCESS CENTER

The Instructional Process Center, located in a library conference room of North Central High School, serves as a resource for teachers and students who seek optional or supplemental learning activities for a particular lesson, unit, objective, etc. The process center concept was created and developed for the 1978-79 school year by administrators and alternative staff in response to a desire and a need for a liason between the regular program and alternative program. The resource person of the IPC (having taught in the alternative program for three years) is skilled in developing optional learning activities and methods for individualization. The goals for the resources person include:

1. To help teachers increase their use of community resources through speakers or field trips for a class or specific individuals within the class.

2. To strengthen communication among alternative and non-alternative teachers.

3. To create at least two special instructional seminars each semester which would be available to students on a volunteer basis during their study hall time. These seminars would seek to improve the students' skills in study, research, communication, test-taking, and analysis.

4. To provide assistance to teachers seeking to offer learning options for individuals in their courses. Contract writing, peer tutoring, independent study, small group activities, special projects related to course work, or community projects related to course work are some possiblities.

5. To investigate the learning styles of students referred to the instructional process center in order to help teachers create learning activities appropriate for these individuals.

6. To work closely with the reading teacher and other special teachers to identify learning problems of students referred to the instructional process center in order to help teachers create appropriate learning activities.

The activities of the resource person covered a wide range and in her judgment met with varying degrees of success. Several teachers sought help in locating community resources and setting up field trips. Others consulted her for suggestions to help solve problems in individualization or to help students who were experiencing difficulties. In many cases these efforts had positive results but in some cases it was difficult to judge due to the lack of feedback from teachers regarding ideas they had implemented or individual students' progress.

One particularly successful activity was the SAT Preparation Seminar designed to improve test taking skills. The seminar, offered to study hall students on a volunteer basis, met weekly. Other study hall options included teacher and guest speaker presentations on topics such as drug abuse, wilderness survival, survival in the city, career awareness, and decision-making. In some cases students were not seriously interested in the topic (i.e. it was a way to get out of study hall) or teachers sent large numbers of students indiscriminately which created problems.

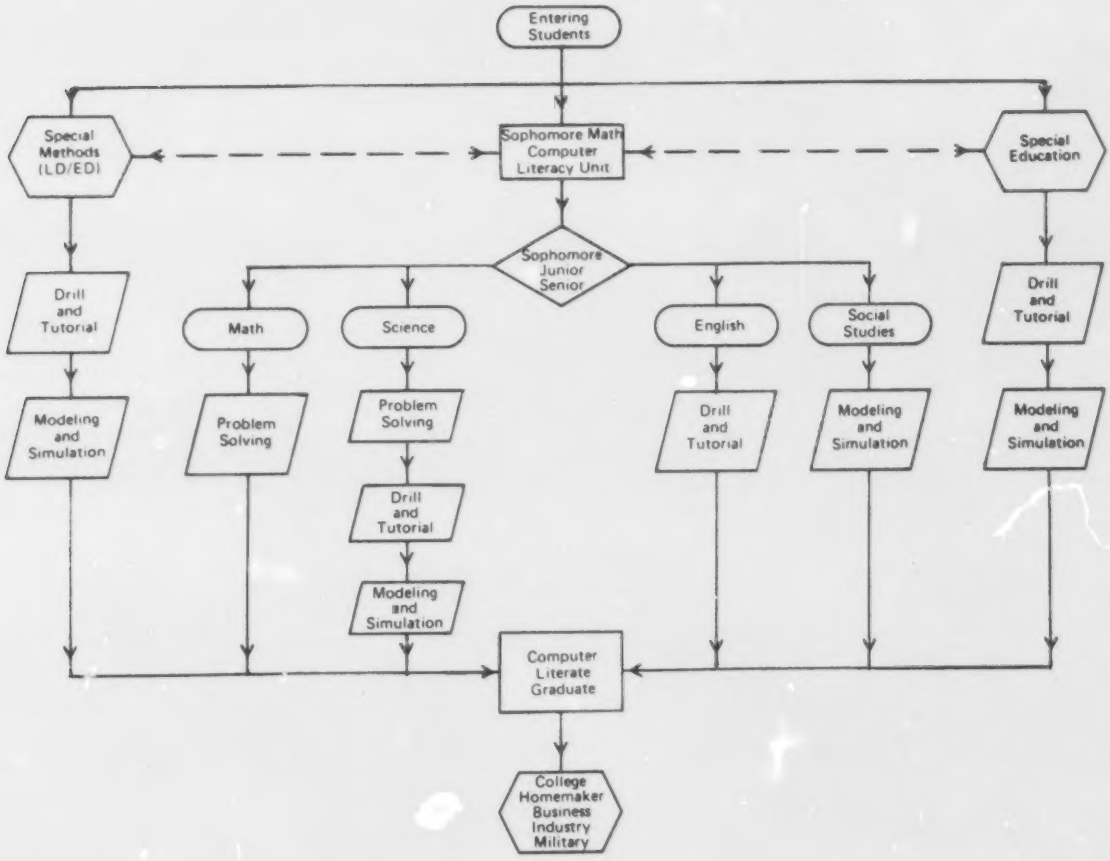
During the second semester, the resource person was asked to teach a social studies class comprised of 15 students from 8 different classes who were experiencing difficulty with the prescribed text and traditional teaching methods. To meet the special needs of these students, a modified contract was developed to insure structure, acquistion of skills, and a degree of student choice in materials, activities, and evaluation. (See sample contract & evaluation form.) By incorporating "real life" experiences and activities such as interviews with older people about the 1930's, visitations to the blind school and a military base, etc. student involvement and motivation increased greatly. One student who interviewed her father about the treatment of blacks in the 1930's said, "I never realized my dad knew so much!" A highlight for many students was the culmination of the 1920's biography project—a party in which each student came dressed as the famous person he/she studied.

The resource person of the Instructional Process Center feels that she has met with some degree of success in her role of liason between the alternative and regular program. Many teachers and students have benefited from her suggestions and one-on-one assistance. Through questionnaires and surveys the resource person is currently eliciting suggestions from staff on how to increase the effectiveness and number of people served by the Instructional Process Center.

COMPUTER BASED INSTRUCTION

The Lilly grant paid for terminals, peripheral equipment, a complete staff and an operating budget for the first phase of the computer based instruction program. The program which began at North Central High School in September, 1975 is four-fold, focusing on computer literacy, problem solving, drill and tutorial, and modeling and simulation.

The lab is open from 8-4 for computer literacy classes and open periods which are used by students for independent study and programming. Users may either create the programs themselves or use the Computer Resource Library containing programs in academic disciplines of mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, social studies, and business. The following diagram illustrates how North Central High School students have in some way been able to participate in the CBE program.*



SUPPORT CENTER

The Support Center operated during the 1977-78 school year as an alternative to suspension for students referred to administrators and counselors for attitude or insubordination problems. Lilly funds paid the salary of the one teacher/coordinator.

Students suspended for three days had the option of spending the time in the Support Center where the coordinator helped them write behavior and academic contracts. The support center coordinator worked closely with **Learning Unlimited** staff, using the program van and arranging for Support Center students to participate in community and small group seminar experiences in the alternative program.

During their time in the Support Center, students worked on their assignments, had individual tutoring in problem areas or participated in community based experiences which they felt would help them better deal with their behavior problems (e.g. one student observed in criminal court a full day and recorded "excuses" that defendants used to rationalize their behavior. Another student, who complained of being bored—of having nothing to do—volunteered a few days in a hospital for the handicapped where people struggled daily to be **able** to do the every day things that most people take for granted.) The Support Center was a stopping place, a few days of respite from the day to day routine, where kids could sit back and look at themselves and their problems and try to put them into perspective.

Benefits to the student who opted for the Support Center instead of suspension were significant: in addition to the personal counseling and a pleasant change of routine, they were not counted absent and therefore were allowed to make up assignments and tests missed by not being in class.

Statistics compiled by the coordinator showed the program to have been successful in at least 20% of the several hundred students who participated in it that year.

Though the Support Center operated for only one school year, it allowed for some experimentation in an area of concern to teachers, counselors and administrators and may have been a pilot for a similar program now in operation which is geared towards helping learning students.

BASIC SKILLS OPTION

Prompted by the belief that different learning environments must be provided to address the needs of an ever increasingly diverse audience of students, a second alternative program was implemented in the fall of 1979. Mr. Eugene Cloncs, principal of North Central, built a support team of teachers and specialists to design a program for students who had been alienated by previous school experiences, lacked mastery of basic skills, or both. A team teaching approach was developed to include flexibility of time, classroom management, and learning activities related to English, math, U.S. History, and science. Basic learning skills are carefully integrated with personal development and the acquisition of practical life skills.*

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Through out the five year funding period, **Learning Unlimited** staff and students have spoken about the program at educational conferences, community organizations (such as Kiwanis and Rotary Clubs) and university classes. Presentations have been given to a wide variety of organizations including the Indiana State Teachers' Association, National Council of Teachers of Social

Studies, National Association for Secondary School Principals, Indiana School Boards Association, and the Lilly Conference on Alternative Education. Staff members have worked as consultants with school systems all over the United States where teachers and administrators are interested in adding an experiential individualized component to their curriculums.

During the 1975-76 school year, **Learning Unlimited** students and staff organized a conference for alternative school students throughout the midwest. With the S.A.I.L. (Student Action In Learning) Conference, **Learning Unlimited** took a leadership role in beginning to network schools which could use each other for a variety of kinds of resources. Since 1976, the S.A.I.L. Conference has become an annual event and has involved students from alternative schools from Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Colorado. Responsibility for the conference has rotated to participating schools in Indianapolis, Indiana; Cincinnati, Ohio; Racine, Wisconsin; and State College, Pennsylvania. During the summer of 1979, Indiana University sponsored SUMMER S.A.I.L., a nine day conference for high school students in the theory and practice of experiential education.

WHAT DID WASHINGTON TOWNSHIP ACHIEVE WITH THE LILLY GRANT?

Positive spin-off Benefits to Total System

Expansion of concept of learning options

Emphasis on process and affective skill development integrated along with academic skill development

Program and student evaluation models

Individualized-personalized instruction models

Gifted student instruction models

Remedial models (classroom as a therapeutic and rehabilitative environment)

Competency based instruction

In-service and professional growth opportunities to total staff (expanded awareness of current innovations)

Community-based experiential learning

Parental-student curriculum input design

Research on teaching-learning

Expansion of solutions to North Central High School present senior-year dilemma

Reduction in number of classes that are totally teacher centered or dominated

Design of a student leadership development model

Responsive administrative model

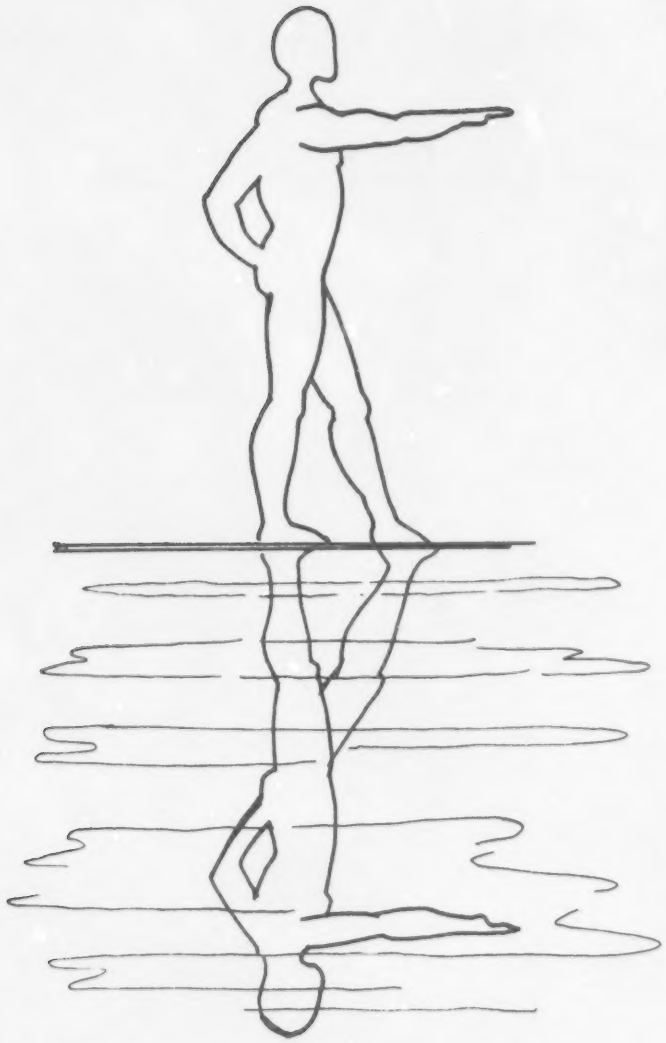
Computer-assisted instruction

Basic Skills option

Many educational materials were developed including films, tapes, books, etc.

Outdoor education programs

Performing Arts option



CHAPTER EIGHT
LOOKING BACK

A PERSONAL REFLECTION

If you look through the wrong end of the kaleidoscope, all you see are a bunch of tiny colored shapes jumbled together at the bottom of the cylinder's rim. None of them alone is as imposing as the designs they make together, but it is interesting, sometimes, to look at a kaleidoscope like this and realize that though its patterns may be mystifyingly intricate, there is at its base, something very simple and concrete.

The pieces of our kaleidoscopes have scattered—teachers have moved on to new experiences and the ones who remain have developed new interests and enthusiasms. Students have graduated and gone to college, to marriages, and to the job market. In this last chapter, we have tried to pull them all together again for a moment; to take one more look at the design together before the kaleidoscope is held up to the light and turned once again.

At its best, **Learning Unlimited** has changed some peoples' lives and made them see new patterns of possibilities for themselves and for the world; at its worst, it fought inevitable apathy and the human tendency to move toward more comfortable, reliable structures. The following

quotes from students, parents and teachers who participated in the program reflect their attempts to give meaning to the past five years. The comments of North Central's traditional staff who watched the program develop from the outside give a different perspective, and therein lies their value.

Selected Verbatim Narrative Comments of Students

"I learned to be my own best friend"

"It's easier to get good grades in regular program"

"I am very proud of myself and what I've accomplished. I have 199% more self-confidence than I ever had before"

"I am able to talk to people more freely and I'm a more open person"

"I have been **trusted** to choose my own path and I have grown so much in the last year. There is no way I can repay the program for everything I've learned and done"

"I no longer dread Mondays"

"I'm really having fun and learning more than ever"

"Each teacher inspires me to work harder and form meaningful relationships"

"I became so interested and involved in my studies and all the learning opportunities, I didn't have time for my job and had to quit"

"At first I was behind the regular program (work-wise) but I've caught up by learning how to push myself"

"My personality has changed because I now understand that other people have moods and I'm not always hurt by them"

"I discovered a sense of caring between students and parents in family group"

"There is too much to do. I'm a person who likes to do everything. This frustrates me but it has caused me to make choices"

"I gained much by being exposed to different kinds of people in deep relationships. I feel I'm more independent now and can handle my own predicaments more objectively and efficiently"

LEARNING UNLIMITED STUDENTS SPEAK OUT

How has the program changed since you have been involved?

Not much, except that all of the original people are gone and it's lost some of the original enthusiasm

Enthusiasm has gone down

There's not quite as much unity.

There is a little more classroom structure

More rules (for the better) governing attendance.

Student participation has slackened

Participation in town meeting has been **bad**

Stricter requirements, closer relationships, better opportunities

We seem to be heading toward an institution which should be avoided. We are growing too large and I hate to say it, but homogenized. We have lost some of the vitality in order to insure a future.

What do you see as Learning Unlimited's main problem area(s)?

Lack of participation

People taking advantage of their rights

Town meeting attendance

Abuse of free time

Entrance requirements. And this relates to our attitude of the program. We need a better understanding of the ideals of the program and how we are to approach them.

We don't have the vitality I feel the program had in its first years and this is not good.

How has the program affected you personally?

I have become better aware of my capabilities and those of the people around me. I feel less self-conscious about the world and this allows me to make contacts which I would normally avoid.

I've learned about myself. I feel better towards my responsibilities and myself.

Positive outlook on life. I want to experience things more often.

It has made me more easy going and open with people.

The program has made me more responsible

I've been exposed to many new situations through intensives, group work, and community experience.

I've become more articulate, self-confident, self-motivated, and secure.

LEARNING UNLIMITED STAFF SPEAKS OUT

Identify several major problem areas. If you had a second chance, how would you (individually or as part of a staff) approach these problems differently?

Disfunctioning students: Call parents sooner. Overcome the idea that getting angry with students is wrong.

Students taking advantage of the program—using their class time to go to McDonald's. I like the idea of a probationary period for the first "offense" and back to the regular program the next time. This needs to be an iron-clad rule that each student is aware of from the time he/she enters the program.

Screening must eliminate those not able to handle **Learning Unlimited.**

More experienced and dedicated staff.

My inability to give students full responsibility for the learning—solution: possibility better contract writing

Relationship with other school

Many students want only the privileges the program offers, but are not willing to assume the responsibility.

My approach was, and would be again if I had to do it over, "Full speed ahead and damn the torpedos!" I always said we should make the program as good as we could for as long as we could and if it were cancelled, at least we could say we gave it our all and went down fighting for what we believed in!

A chronic problem was student accountability in non-academic curriculum components (challenge areas and community). With a second chance, I would develop a stricter system of accountability in these areas. I feel that students who do not use the community as a learning resource should be returned to the regular program.

In what area(s) has the program been least effective?

Discipline, attendance, working with the under-achievers

Developing motivated students from students who don't care.

The program has been least effective to those who are not self-motivated. Therefore, a bad image to the rest of the school staff.

Communicating the purpose and good qualities of the program to the traditional staff. Not always dealt with this problem.

In conquering the fear of criticism from the school and community

In developing a truly innovative non-traditional structure for learning which would provide the benefits but not the constraints of traditional education.

In defining clearly what **Learning Unlimited** is—trying to "please everybody all the time"—instead of choosing a focus and developing qualitatively along those lines.

In your opinion, what has been the greatest accomplishment of Learning Unlimited?

Teaching students the value of learning and continually growing throughout life!

The non-threatening atmosphere in which the student must assume responsibility for one's learning destiny.

I think it has been in demonstrating to other teachers that students can take the responsibility for their own education—that the teacher does not have to pour information into the student and that ACTIVE learning is more affective than PASSIVE learning. Unfortunately, I think **Learning Unlimited** has had a greater impact on people outside the school system than on educators within the system who could use some of the ideas in their own classrooms.

Judicial Inquiry, Walkabouts, community involvement

Learning Unlimited allows students to test their own responsibilities as far as motivation in starting a goal and follow through to a finished product.

Valuable experiences have "spun off" to other areas of the school, i.e. PE, business, etc. Now many of the options are accepted by the "traditional" classroom teachers.

During the first year of its existence, the program was fantastic. Education was a flexible, open, spontaneous, and thoroughly exciting experience. The whole staff seemed to grow and broaden their respective positions. Unfortunately, after that year, there was a mass exodus back to the status quo.

SELECTED VERBATIM NARRATIVE COMMENTS OF PARENTS

"With regard to the Program, more guidance and consultation from instructors would be helpful."

"The opportunities provided by the Program have opened a whole new world for (our daughter).

"Although (our daughter) is more aware of current issues, economics, etc., she has very idealistic views on most subjects which we do **not** feel are actually her own views reached through study of situations."

"We believe that the Alternative Program is not merely another innovation but a sound departure which, when further developed, will be much more interesting for students **and** teachers than the traditional format."

"The Alternative Program has taught my daughter t· ·umber one to herself which has led to the respect of her peers and the adult world."

"This was a great year for (our son). Both my husband and I are grateful for the entire program."

"It's difficult (for me) to say if the Alternative Program has influenced development or whether its just maturation."

"My son had no self-confidence when he entered the Program and no apparent talent. Now he has talents I didn't know he possessed and the confidence to try in any new area."

"The Program needs a better orientation program for students entering it."

"I think – – – – – – – – – – – – has gained much in Alternative Education from one on one contact with teachers."

". . . . . .we believe that the Program contributed strongly to (our daughter's) academic and social progress."

"Perhaps the Alternative Program has erred somewhat in assuming students have more self-discipline and judgement than they actually have . . . . . ."

"(Our daughter) was good at (decision making) activities when she started, but the Alternative Program has definitely helped."

"The Alternative Program has been a wonderful learning experience for (my son)."

TRADITIONAL STAFF SPEAKS OUT

In which areas has Learning Unlimited been least effective?

In screening and/or eliminating those students who do, in fact, abuse the freedom inherent in the program.

It still is not the answer for the unmotivated student. It provides him/her with a license to steal.

It is my feeling that those administering the program are hesitant to allow a student to fail.

Discipline—the "self" variety. Many alternative students seem restless, not creative.

Enabling students to meet responsibility, to cope in a more structured situation.

Allowing students who have little or no experience in a given area to write objectives and goals for it — and then do them in only a half ----- manner.

Public relations—more faculty in this building need to be made aware of the **real work** done in the program.

In teaching the poor, indifferent or completely alienated student. Like all areas of teaching, alternative education does tend to be best for the highly motivated student.

Maintaining the North Central standard of performance.

Describe the impact of Learning Unlimited on Washington Township schools.

Greater emphasis on "innovation" in all teaching. Students and administrators seem to expect teachers in the traditional classroom to adapt methods used in the alternative program, some of which are of doubtful value.

Positive. Parents like having choices available for the special needs of their children.

It has catered to the child who can or will not accept traditional methods.

Heightened student/teacher/parent awareness of new possibilities for education.

I have not seen the impact.

It underlines the commitment of MSDWT to meet the needs of all students. I feel it meets the needs of some very well, but continuous effort must be made to see that students don't see the program as an "easy out" for a lazy student.

It has fostered irresponsibility, and mediocre work on the part of many students—more structure, direction and guidance are needed.

It has been unfortunate—open school situation has been detrimental to the regular program, particularly in attendance.

It has been a mixed blessing. Motivated students have gained experiences not available conventionally, but many students have been self-centered and think they should be free to do as they please.

Unfortunately it has the reputation of another way to avoid responsibility.

Has been a crippling influence on both school system and students.

Generally beneficial. There have been some strong negative feelings—possibly jealously—about such things as smaller classes in **Learning Unlimited** and the feeling that the staff gets to select while other teachers do not.

I feel that it provides a haven for the unmotivated student.

In your opinion what has been the greatest accomplishment of Learning Unlimited?

The greatest accomplishment of the program has been the creativity of the staff in preparing alternative means of learning.

Judicial Inquiry

Stimulated a **few** students to better utilize or develop own abilities.

It offers choice and freedom to students who do not cope well in a regimented classroom.

Don't know.

Spending funds made available by Lilly Foundation.

Possibly in making more "regular" staff members consider alternate techniques and methods.

Possibly in appreciating their own methods. Mostly in providing really great mobility and opportunities for uniqueness.

They get great publicity in local papers.

Making teachers aware of alternative instruction styles, learning styles and individualization.

Perhaps acceptance of a different approach is a sort of accomplishment.

To open all of our minds to new ideas to innovation in education.

It has provided some travel experiences for some students that may not have had the opportunity.

To offer alternatives to those students who are self-directed and motivated enough to benefit from and not abuse such a program.

To allow creativity among students in their education. But more than that it has been one of the few efforts which has promoted the concept that the student is responsible for his/her own education.

FINIS

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